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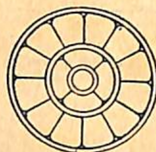
MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

JANUARY, 1957

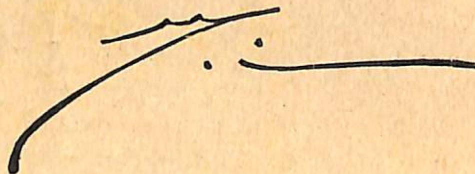
MOTHER INDIA

JANUARY 1956

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Lord, Thou hast willed, and I execute:
A new light breaks upon the earth,
A new world is born.
The things that were promised are fulfilled.



MOTHER INDIA

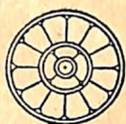
MONTHLY REVIEW OF CULTURE

Vol. VIII — No. 12

"Great is Truth and it shall prevail"

CONTENTS

Students' Section



1957

Seule une puissance plus grande que celle du mal peut remporter la victoire. Ce n'est pas un corps crucifié mais un corps glorifié qui sauvera le monde.



1957

A Power greater than that of Evil can alone win the victory. It is not a crucified but a glorified body that will save the world.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(*Based on the Mother's Talks to the Children of the Ashram*)

THE TRUE TEACHING

YOU must have observed that my way of talking to you is not always the same. I don't know whether you are very sensitive to the difference, but for me it is considerable.

Sometimes, on rare occasions, because of something read or for another reason, there comes to me in the wake of a question what is called an experience but what is simply the fact of entering into a certain state of consciousness and, having entered into it, describing that very state. In such a case, the Force, the Consciousness that express themselves pass across the individual mind, use it like a store-house of words and draw from it by a sort of affinity the words necessary for the expression. This is the true teaching, the teaching that is difficult to find in books. It can be there, but one must be oneself in that state of consciousness to be able to discover it, whereas, with the spoken word, the sound-vibration transmits at least something of the experience and this can be contagious for all who are sensitive.

On other occasions, the question posed and the subject chosen are conveyed by the mind to the higher Consciousness. The mind receives a response from that Consciousness and conveys it through the word. This is what generally happens in all teachings, provided that the one who teaches has the capacity to pass the question on to the higher Consciousness—a capacity not always present.

I should tell you that the second method does not interest me much. Very often, when the question or the subject fails to give me the possibility of entering into a state of consciousness that interests me, I far prefer to keep silent. And it is, as it were, a sense of duty that makes me talk.

I am informing you in advance, because in the past I have cut short the conversation and passed abruptly into meditation.

3-10 1956

(K. D. S.)

On Teachers and Teaching

Mastery means to know how to deal with certain vibrations. If you have the knowledge and can deal with the vibrations, you have the mastery. The best field for such an experience and experiment is yourself. First, you must have mastery over yourself and when you have it, you can transmit its vibrations to others in so far as you are capable of identifying yourself with them. But if you cannot deal with the vibrations in yourself how can you deal with them in others ? You can, by word or by influence, encourage people so that they do what is necessary to master themselves, but you cannot yourself have direct mastery over them.

To master something, a movement, for example, means, by your simple presence, without any word, any explanation, to replace a bad vibration by the true one. By means of the word, by means of explanation and discussion, even a certain emanation of force, you exert an influence upon another, but you do not master the movement. Mastery over a movement is the capacity to set against the vibration of the movement a stronger, truer vibration that can stop the other vibration. An example can be easily given.

Two persons are quarrelling in your presence, not only are they quarrelling, they are about to come to blows. Then you approach and explain to them that it is not the thing to do and you give good reasons so that they stop in the end. You exercise an influence over them in this way. But if, on the other hand, you simply stand before them, look at them and send out a vibration of peace and calm and quietness without uttering a word, without any explanation whatsoever, and if as a result the other vibration does not stand but falls off by itself, that is mastery.

It is the same with regard to curing ignorance. If words are necessary to explain a certain thing, then you have not the true knowledge. If I have to speak out all that I mean to say in order to make you understand, then I have not the mastery, it is simply that I exercise an influence upon your intelligence and help you to understand, awaken in you the desire to know, to discipline yourself etc., etc. But if I am not able, simply by looking at you, without saying anything, to make you enter into the light that will make you understand, well, I have not mastered the state of ignorance.

Q. The problem of teachers is: how to control the classes, how to bring the students under discipline ?

How can you have control over your students or discipline them unless you have control over yourself ?

Q. But to learn to have control or mastery over oneself would take a whole life-time !

It is a pity ! But how can you hope otherwise ? When you have an undisciplined, disobedient, insolent student, it means a certain vibration in the atmosphere which is unfortunately very contagious. If you do not have in yourself the contrary vibration, the vibration of discipline, order, humility, calmness, peace that nothing disturbs, how can you hope, I say, to have an influence ? You may tell the student that such a thing should not be done; but the result may be worse or he may mock at you. And if, on top of it, you do not know how to control yourself, but get into a temper, well, you may be done for, you may lose for your whole life all possibility of controlling your students.

Teachers who do not possess perfect calm, endurance that can stand all test, tranquillity that nothing shakes, who have not cast off their *amour propre* are not the kind that can ever succeed. You must be a saint, a hero in order to be a good teacher. You must be a great Yogi to be a good teacher. You must yourself have always the perfect attitude if you demand from your students a perfect attitude. You cannot ask of any person a thing which you cannot do yourself.

So then look within yourself at the difference there is between what is and what should be; that will give you the measure of your lack of success in the class.

Now I would like to add one word, since I have the occasion. We have asked many of our students, when they are grown up and know something, to teach others. There are some, I believe, who know the reason why; but there are others who think that it is because it is good to serve in some way or other, because teachers are needed after all and that we are glad to have them. But I tell you, for it is a fact, I have never asked any of those who were educated here to give lessons unless I saw that that was the best way for them to get self-discipline, to learn what they are to teach, to attain an inner perfection which they would not otherwise than by being teachers and having this opportunity, an exceptionally severe one for self-discipline.

They who are successful here as teachers,—I do not mean an external, artificial and superficial success,—they who become truly good teachers, are exactly those who are capable of making an inner progress towards impersonalisation, capable of eliminating their egoism, becoming master of their movements, possessing insight, comprehension of others and a patience proof against all test and trial.

If you have passed through that discipline and succeeded, then you will not have wasted your time here. I ask every one who accepts the work of giving

lessons to accept in that spirit. It is all very nice to be obliging, to give service, to be useful; it is a very good thing, certainly. But it is only one side, perhaps the most unimportant side of the question. The much greater, more important side is this, that you have been given the Grace so that you may arrive at mastering yourself, at an understanding of your subject and of other persons which you could not have done but for this opportunity. And if you have not profited during all these years that you are teaching, well, it means you have wasted at least half of your time.

Q. What about the organisation of studies at school? If the students are given full freedom, as it is supposed you have given them, that is to say, if they are permitted to come to the classes or go away from them as they like or learn or not learn their lessons according to their choice, then how can a system or organisation work?

But when did I say that a student is free to come and go as he likes ? You must not confuse matters. I said and I repeat that if a student feels that a particular subject is foreign to him, if, for example, he has a capacity for literature and poetry and a disgust or even dislike for mathematics, in that case, if the student comes and tells me, "I prefer not to follow the course of mathematics", I cannot answer him, "No, you must absolutely do it". But once a student has decided to follow a class, it is quite an elementary discipline for him to follow the class, to attend it regularly, to behave decently while he is there. Otherwise it is unworthy of him to go to school at all. I have never encouraged people to loiter about during class hours or to come one day and be absent the next day, never, for, to begin with, if you are not able to submit yourself to this very elementary discipline, you will never succeed in having the least control over yourself; you will be always the slave of every impulse and fancy of yours.

If you do not want to study a certain line of knowledge, it is all right, you are not obliged to do so. But if you decide to do a thing in life, whatever it is, you must do it honestly, in a disciplined, regular and methodical manner, without giving yourself to fancy. I have never approved that a person should be the plaything of his impulses and caprices. You can never get sanction for that out of me, for you are then no longer a human being but an animal.

14-11-1956

NOLINI KANTA GUPTA

CORRESPONDENCE WITH SRI AUROBINDO

3-3-1936

MYSELF: A.K.'s poetry has caused a flutter. Another miracle, they say. How has this feat been done ? A fellow who has never written any bit of poetry produces, just after one or two pieces, a remarkable poem and a long one at that, which will have an abiding place in Bengali literature! How could he have produced it ?

SRI AUROBINDO: What a 'hower' you are ! You are puzzled because you are always demanding a rational process familiar to the ordinary physical mind from a suprarational thing like Yoga. Yoga has its processes, but they can only be understood and detected by those who have Yogic experience. But you refuse to accept that experience as valid. You want everything to be explained according to your own field of reason which is that of the ignorant physical mind. If you persist in that you will remain puzzled to the end of the chapter.

MYSELF: I have been labouring for years, yet produced nothing so big and, when I write a poem, I know by my own active experience the way it comes.

SRI AUROBINDO: That is because you are a 'hower' and an efforter—so the Divine or the Overself or whatever the people like to call it has to pretend with you that it is done in you by your stupendous effort and the how has to be shown—the how being that you work 40 hours and produce 4 lines.

4-3-1936

MYSELF: You ask me why I don't keep my inner condition right. As if I knew how to do it ! It keeps itself right or goes wrong without the least caring for my effort.

SRI AUROBINDO: What about the wonderful efforts (unprecedented in human history) by which X and you have made yourselves poets ? Why can't you put some of that superhuman effort into this ? If you do and succeed, I will rigorously leave all the credit to you and not ask any for a superior Power.

MYSELF: The Force had seized me and has now left me—that's all.

SRI AUROBINDO: What is this talk about Force ? Nothing is done in this world except by one's own effort. Ask your own reason and X.

MYSELF: You say I am an efforter. Well, without effort, how to write ? If I had waited for a spontaneous downpour of Inspiration, my outpours by now would have been only 4 or 5 !

SRI AUROBINDO: I don't understand. You say it is only by effort that one can write poetry—that is, what is written is something constructed by mere effort. It follows that anybody who makes a necessary effort can become a great poet. Up till now it was thought that there was some mysterious thing called inspiration. There are plenty of people who have made Herculean and untiring efforts night and day but have not succeeded in writing anything that others would call poetry—they may have just produced good or bad verse. That however in the light of your luminous rationality is evidently an agelong error. As X might say "I labour and write poems day and night and people give the credit to some damned thing (not my own great self) they call Inspiration." Evidently. But what is this about a few cases ? Are you going to tell me that Inspiration after all exists ? Can't be.

6-3-1936

MYSELF: As regards poetry, inspiration exists, so also effort. The first two leave one sometimes and one goes on beating and beating, hammering and hammering, but they come not !

SRI AUROBINDO: Exactly. When any real effect is produced, it is not because of the beating and the hammering, but because an inspiration slips down between the raising of the hammer and the falling and gets in under cover of the beastly noise. It is when there is no need of effort that the best comes. Effort is all right, but only as an excuse for inducing the Inspiration to come. If it wants to come, it comes; if it doesn't, it doesn't and one is obliged to give up after producing nothing or an inferior mind-made something. I have had that experience often enough myself. I have seen Amal also often producing something good but not perfect, beating the air and hammering it with proposed versions each as bad as the other; for it is only a new inspiration that can really improve a defect in the transcription of the first one. Still one makes efforts, but it is not the effort that produces the result but the inspiration that comes in answer to it. You knock at the door to make the fellow inside answer. He may or he may not; if he lies mum, you have only to walk off, swearing. That's effort and inspiration.

MYSELF: One has to work hours and hours on end. What do you call this labour ?

SRI AUROBINDO: Hammering, making a beastly noise so that Inspiration may get excited and exasperated and fling something through the window, muttering "I hope that will keep this insufferable tinsmith quiet."

MYSELF: My brain is now less hampered by the body's indisposition.

My boil has burst and as you see
From the depression I am free.
Thanks Guru, thanks to thee !

SRI AUROBINDO: Yes, I got irritated last night by your persistent boiling and put a gigantic Force which, I am glad to see, burst the little boil.

Thank God for that !
Free from boil,
At poems toil.
Laugh and grow fat.

9-3-1936

MYSELF: You actually propose "Laugh and grow fat" though laughing never makes fat !

SRI AUROBINDO: You oppose one of the most ancient traditions of humanity by this severe statement. But your statement is mistaken even according to Science. We are now told that it is the activity of certain glands that makes you thin or fat. If glands, then why not gladness ?

MYSELF : Really I am now wondering at my own revelry and hilarity. No particular concern about yoga, yet I am happy. What kind of psychic attitude is this ?

SRI AUROBINDO : It is not a psychic attitude, but is better than depression.

MYSELF : What has happend to my typescript ? Hibernating ?

SRI AUROBINDO : My dear sir, if you saw me nowadays with my nose to paper from afternoon to morning, deciphering, deciphering, writing, writing, writing, even the rocky heart of a disciple would be touched and you would not talk about typescripts and hibernation. I have given up (for the present at least) the attempt to minimise the cataract of correspondence ; I accept my fate like Raman Maharshi with the plague of prasads and admirers, but at least don't add anguish to annihilation by talking about typescripts.

MYSELF : What is the use of your complaining ? You have committed the grave blunder of coming into this sorrowful world with a mighty magical pen. Sri Krishna, I conjecture, may have complained about his lungs because of incessant blowing and fluting to melt our hearts.

SRI AUROBINDO : It is an idea ! Strange that none of the poets has mentioned it—a modernist poet would catch at it at once, "The Flute and the Lungs" or "Krishna's Bronchitis."

14-3-1936

MYSELF : Isn't it true that you can't really love the Divine until you experience him in some way ? Before that it won't be an intense or deep love.

SRI AUROBINDO : Your supposition conflicts with the experience of many sadhaks. I think Ramakrishna indicated somewhere that the love and joy and ardour of seeking was much more intense than that of fulfilment. I don't agree, but that shows at least that intense love is possible before realisation.

MYSELF : Don't you think your realisation of the Self helped you in your crucial moments, kept up your faith and love..

SRI AUROBINDO : That has nothing to do with love. Realisation of Self and love of the personal Divine are two different movements.

My struggle has never been about the Self. All that is perfectly irrelevant to the question which concerns the Bhakta's love for the Divine.

MYSELF : But the sweet memory of that experience of the Self must have sustained you.

SRI AUROBINDO : There was nothing sugary about it at all. And I had no need to have any memory of it, because it was with me for months and years and is there now though in fusion with other realisations. My point is that there are hundreds of Bhaktas who have the love and seeking without any concrete experience, with only a mental conception or emotional belief in the Divine to support them. The whole point is that it is untrue to say that one must have a decisive or concrete experience before one can have love for the Divine. It is contrary to the facts and the quite ordinary facts of the spiritual experience.

MYSELF : It is only the lion hearts that can go on without any experience.

SRI AUROBINDO : The ordinary Bhakta is not a lion heart. The lion hearts

get experiences comparatively soon but the ordinary Bhakta has often to feed on his own love or yearning of years and years—and he does it.

19-3-1936

MYSELF : Freed once more from the Devil's claws ! Just a few words on the process : I took up X's poem, felt like writing one after reading it, failed, then went to Pranam; there found J's letter waiting, read it and as soon as I sat in the Hall, lo, everything fell off ! What then did the job—poem, letter ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Yes, of course, it was the old man of the Sea, I mean of Sorrow, who dropped off because he can't stand anything cheerful and hopeful. The main credit goes to the letter, because it has a push in it of the psychic force which took your vital and the O.M. also by surprise and knocked him off and you up before the vital had time to turn round and cry "Hélas ! Hélas ! Alas ! Otototototoi !"

All together—Poetry first attempt, letter brought a good atmosphere (that was the sense of something pleasant) and both were the effect of a long pressure from me which you had resisted sitting firm in a Gandhian passive resistance.

MYSELF : This shows, Sir, you make me suffer unnecessarily; you can at any moment draw me out if it pleases you.

SRI AUROBINDO : Not at all, you can't be drawn out if something in you refuses and sticks like a badger in its hole. When that says, "Oh damn it, after all let me get out and breathe some fresh air," then it can be done.

MYSELF : I don't understand what my friend J means by the disturbance in connection with the affairs of the world.

SRI AUROBINDO : That is clear enough. His new consciousness makes him feel more strongly the opposite forces that one contacts when one moves in the world and has to do affairs and meet with others and he is afraid of a response in his vital which will upset his sadhana or create difficulties. Evidently he is a man who is psychically sensitive or has become so to that thing which you blindly refuse to recognise even when you are in the midst of it—the play of forces. You can feel your friend's atmosphere through the letter "so beautiful, so strengthening, so refreshing" and it has an immediate effect on you. But your mind stares like an owl and wonders "what the hell can this be ?", I suppose, because your medical books never told you about it and how can things be true which are not known either to the ordinary mind or science ? It is by an

incursion of an opposite kind of forces that you fall into the Old Man's clutches, but you can only groan and cry "what's this" and when they are swept aside in a moment by other forces blink and mutter "Well, that's funny !" Your friend can feel and know at once when he is being threatened by the opposite forces and so he can be on his guard and resist old Nick, because he can detect at once one of his principal means of attack.

9-3-1936.

MYSELF : Is effort without demand of result possible unless the psychic fellow comes to the front ?

SRI AUROBINDO : Perfectly possible, if you can once distinguish between the will of the Purusha and the demand of the vital. Of course it is easiest and indeed plain sailing if the psychic comes in front but even before that it is possible.

25-3-1936.

MYSELF : I am obliged to sleep out for a few days because of repairs in our house. The whole building is smelling of lime, lime and lime.

SRI AUROBINDO : If you want to be a real Yogi, go on suffering and suffering at the lime till the smell creates an ecstasy in the nose and you realise that all smells and stinks are sweet and beautiful with the sweetness and beauty of the Brahman.

29-3-1936.

MYSELF : My hard labour and effort deprive me of the joy of creation and discourage with a dread of the work. You say that this is because I am an 'efforter' and 'hower'. Well, show me then the Grand Trunk Road of non-effort.

SRI AUROBINDO : There are two ways of arriving at the Grand Trunk Road. One is to climb and struggle and effortise (like the pilgrim who traverses India prostrating and measuring the way with his body : that is the way of effort). One day you suddenly find yourself on the G. T. R. when you least expect it. The other is to quiet the mind to such a point that a greater Mind of mind can speak through it. (I am not here talking of the Supramental.) You will do neither. Your mind refuses to be quiet—your vital kicks at the necessity of effort. One too active, the other too lazy. How can I show you the G. T. R. when you refuse either way of reaching it ?

MYSELF : I have resorted to prayer. Well, if a prayer means a call to the Above, why doesn't the Above have the kindness to respond, especially when it is just on the other side of my street ? The Above being so close and concrete, I can't understand the lack of response.

SRI AUROBINDO : But just answer! If it responded to everybody in all circumstances, there would by this time be 100 million poets writing away for all they were worth, let us say 1000 pages of poetry a day each and publishing them. Wouldn't it be a disaster ? Wouldn't such kindness be a cruelty to all the rest of the creation ?

NIRODBARAN

THE SECRET OF THE VEDA

SRI AUROBINDO

CHAPTER XXIII

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

WE have now closely scrutinised the Angirasa legend in the Rig-veda from all possible sides and in all its main symbols and are in a position to summarise firmly the conclusions we have drawn from it. As I have already said, the Angirasa legend and the Vritra mythus are the two principal parables of the Veda; they occur and recur everywhere; they run through the hymns as two closely connected threads of symbolic imagery, and around them all the rest of the Vedic symbolism is woven. Not that they are its central ideas, but they are two main pillars of this ancient structure. When we determine their sense, we have determined the sense of the whole Rik Sanhita. If Vritra and the waters symbolise the cloud and the rain and the gushing forth of the seven rivers of the Punjab and if the Angirasas are the bringers of the physical dawn, then the Veda is a symbolism of natural phenomena personified in the figure of gods and Rishis and maleficent demons. If Vritra and Vala are Dravidian gods and the Panis and Vritras human enemies, then the Veda is a poetical and legendary account of the invasion of Dravidian India by Nature-worshipping barbarians. If on the other hand this is a symbolism of the struggle between spiritual powers of Light and Darkness, Truth and Falsehood, Knowledge and Ignorance, Death and Immortality, then that is the real sense of the whole Veda.

We have concluded that the Angirasa Rishis are bringers of the Dawn, rescuers of the Sun out of the darkness, but that this Dawn, Sun, Darkness are figures used with a spiritual significance. The central conception of the Veda is the conquest of the Truth out of the darkness of Ignorance and by the conquest of the Truth the conquest also of Immortality. For the Vedic *Ṛtam* is a spiritual as well as a psychological conception. It is the true being, the true consciousness, the true delight of existence beyond this earth of body, this mid-region of vital force, this ordinary sky or heaven of mind. We have to cross beyond all these planes in order to arrive at the higher plane of that superconscient Truth which is the own home of the gods and the foundation of Immortality. This is the world of Swar, to which the Angirasas have found the path for their posterity.

The Angirasas are at once the divine seers who assist in the cosmic and human workings of the gods and their earthly representatives, the ancient fathers who first found the wisdom of which the Vedic hymns are a chant and memory and renewal in experience. The seven divine Angirasas are sons or powers of Agni, powers of the Seer-Will, the flame of divine Force instinct with divine knowledge which is kindled for the victory. The Bhrigus have found this Flame secret in the growths of the earthly existence, but the Angirasas kindle it on the altar of sacrifice and maintain the sacrifice through the periods of the sacrificial year symbolising the periods of the divine labour by which the Sun of Truth is recovered out of the darkness. Those who sacrifice for nine months of this year are Navagwas, seers of the nine cows or nine rays, who institute the search for the herds of the Sun and the march of Indra to battle with the Panis. Those who sacrifice for ten months are the Dashagwas, seers of the ten rays who enter with Indra into the cave of the Panis and recover the lost herds.

The sacrifice is the giving by man of what he possesses in his being to the higher or divine nature and its fruit is the farther enrichment of his manhood by the lavish bounty of the gods. The wealth thus gained constitutes a state of spiritual riches, prosperity, felicity which is itself a power for the journey and a force of battle. For the sacrifice is a journey, a progression; the sacrifice itself travels led by Agni up the divine path to the gods and of this journey the ascent of the Angirasa fathers to the divine world of Swar is the type. Their journey of the sacrifice is also a battle, for it is opposed by Panis, Vritras and other powers of evil and falsehood, and of this warfare the conflict of Indra and the Angirasas with the Panis is a principal episode.

The principal features of sacrifice are the kindling of the divine flame, the offering of the *ghṛta* and the Soma-wine and the chanting of the sacred word. By the hymn and the offering the gods are increased; they are said to be born, created or manifested in man and by their increase and greatness here they increase the earth and heaven, that is to say, the physical and mental existence to their utmost capacity and, exceeding these, create in their turn the higher worlds or planes. The higher existence is the divine, the infinite of which the shining Cow, the infinite Mother, Aditi, is the symbol; the lower is subject to her dark form Diti. The object of the sacrifice is to win the higher or divine being and possess with it and make subject to its law and truth the lower or human existence. The *ghṛta* of the sacrifice is the yield of the shining Cow; it is the clarity or brightness of the solar light in the human mentality. The Soma is the immortal delight of existence secret in the waters and the plant and pressed out for drinking by gods and men. The word is the inspired speech expressing the thought-illumination of the Truth which rises out of the soul, formed in the heart, shaped by the mind. Agni growing by the *ghṛta*, Indra forceful with

the luminous strength and joy of the Soma and increased by the Word, aid the Angirasas to recover the herds of the Sun.

Brihaspati is the Master of the creative Word. If Agni is the supreme Angirasa, the flame from whom the Angirasas are born, Brihaspati is the one Angirasa with the seven mouths, the seven rays of the illuminative thought and the seven words which express it, of whom these seers are the powers of utterance. It is the complete thought of the Truth, the seven-headed, which wins the fourth or divine world for man by winning for him the complete spiritual wealth, object of the sacrifice. Therefore Agni, Indra, Brihaspati, Soma are all described as winners of the herds of the Sun and destroyers of the Dasyus who conceal and withhold them from man. Saraswati, who is the stream of the Word or inspiration of the Truth, is also a Dasyu-slayer and winner of the shining herds; and they are discovered by Sarama, forerunner of Indra, who is a solar or dawn goddess and seems to symbolise the intuitive power of the Truth. Usha, the Dawn, is at once herself a worker in the great victory and in her full advent its luminous result.

Usha is the divine Dawn, for the Sun that arises by her coming is the Sun of the superconscient Truth; the day he brings is the day of the true life in the true knowledge, the night he dispels is the night of the ignorance which yet conceals the dawn in its bosom. Usha herself is the Truth, *sūnṛtā*, and the mother of Truths. These truths of the divine Dawn are called her cows, her shining herds; while the forces of the Truth that accompany them and occupy the Life are called her horses. Around this symbol of the cows and horses much of the Vedic symbolism turns; for these are the chief elements of the riches sought by man from the gods. The cows of the Dawn have been stolen and concealed by the demons, the lords of darkness in their nether cave of the secret subconscient. They are the illuminations of knowledge, the thoughts of the Truth, *gāvo matayaḥ*, which have to be delivered out of their imprisonment. Their release is the upsurging of the powers of the divine Dawn.

It is also the recovery of the Sun that was lying in the darkness; for it is said that the Sun, "that Truth", was the thing found by Indra and the Angirasas in the cave of the Panis. By the rending of that cave the herds of the divine dawn which are the rays of the Sun of Truth ascend the hill of being and the Sun itself ascends to the luminous upper ocean of the divine existence, led over it by the thinkers like a ship over the waters, till it reaches its farther shore.

The Panis who conceal the herds, the masters of the nether cavern, are a class of Dasyus who are in the Vedic symbolism set in opposition to the Aryan gods and Aryan seers and workers. The Aryan is he who does the work of sacrifice, finds the sacred word of illumination, desires the Gods and increases them

and is increased by them into the largeness of the true existence; he is the warrior of the light and the traveller to the Truth. The Dasyu is the undivine being who does no sacrifice, amasses a wealth he cannot rightly use because he cannot speak the word or mentalise the superconscient Truth, hates the Word, the gods and the sacrifice and gives nothing of himself to the higher existences but robs and withholds his wealth from the Aryan. He is the thief, the enemy, the wolf, the devourer, the divider, the obstructor, the confiner. The Dasyus are powers of darkness and ignorance who oppose the seeker of truth and immortality. The gods are the powers of Light, the children of Infinity, forms and personalities of the one Godhead who by their help and by their growth and human workings in man raise him to the truth and the immortality.

Thus the interpretation of the Angirasa myth gives us the key to the whole secret of the Veda. For if the cows and horses lost by the Aryans and recovered for them by the gods, the cows and horses of which Indra is the lord and giver and indeed himself the Cow and Horse, are not physical cattle, if these elements of the wealth sought by the sacrifice are symbols of spiritual riches, so also must be its other elements which are always associated with them, sons, men, gold, treasure, etc. If the Cow of which the *ghṛta* is the yield is not a physical cow but the shining Mother, then the *ghṛta* itself which is found in the waters and is said to be triply secreted by the Panis in the Cow, is no physical offering, nor the honey-wine of Soma either which is also said to exist in the rivers and to rise in a honeyed wave from the ocean and to flow streaming up to the gods. And if these, then also the other offerings of the sacrifice must be symbolic; the outer sacrifice itself can be nothing but the symbol of an inner giving. And if the Angirasa Rishis are also in part symbolic or are, like the gods, semi-divine workers and helpers in the sacrifice, so also must be the Bhrigus, Atharvans, Ushana and Kutsa and others who are associated with them in their work. If the Angirasa legend and the story of the struggle with the Dasyus is a parable, so also should be the other legendary stories we find in the Rig-veda of the help given by the Gods to the Rishis against the demons; for these also are related in similar terms and constantly classed by the Vedic poets along with the Angirasa story as on the same footing.

Similarly if these Dasyus who refuse the gift and the sacrifice, and hate the Word and the gods and with whom the Aryans are constantly at war, these Vritras, Panis and others, are not human enemies but powers of darkness, falsehood and evil, then the whole idea of the Aryan wars and kings and nations begins to take upon itself the aspect of spiritual symbol and apologue. Whether they are entirely so or only partly, cannot be decided except by a more detailed

examination which is not our present object. Our object is only to see whether there is a *prima facie* case for the idea with which we started that the Vedic hymns are the symbolic gospel of the ancient Indian mystics and their sense spiritual and psychological. Such a *prima facie* case we have established; for there is already sufficient ground for seriously approaching the Veda from this standpoint and interpreting it in detail as such a lyric symbolism.

Still, to make our case entirely firm it will be well to examine the other companion legend of Vritra and the waters which we have seen to be closely connected with that of the Angirasas and the Light. In the first place Indra the Vritra-slayer is along with Agni one of the two chief gods of the Vedic Pantheon and if his character and functions can be properly established, we shall have the general type of the Aryan gods fixed firmly. Secondly, the Maruts, his companions, singers of the sacred chant, are the strongest point of the naturalistic theory of Vedic worship; they are undoubtedly storm-gods and no other of the greater Vedic deities, Agni or the Ashwins or Varuna and Mitra or Twashtri and the goddesses or even Surya the Sun or Usha the Dawn have such a pronounced physical character. If then these storm-gods can be shown to have a psychological character and symbolism, then there can be no farther doubt about the profounder sense of the Vedic religion and ritual. Finally, if Vritra and his associated demons, Shushna, Namuchi and the rest appear when closely scrutinised to be Dasyus in the spiritual sense and if the meaning of the heavenly waters he obstructs be more thoroughly investigated, then the consideration of the stories of the Rishis and the gods and demons as parables can be proceeded with from a sure starting-point and the symbolism of the Vedic worlds brought nearer to a satisfactory interpretation.

More we cannot at present attempt; for the Vedic symbolism as worked out in the hymns is too complex in its details, too numerous in its standpoints, presents too many obscurites and difficulties to the interpreter in its shades and side allusions and above all has been too much obscured by ages of oblivion and misunderstanding to be adequately dealt with in a single work. We can only at present seek out the leading clues and lay as securely as may be the right foundations.

NOW

A band of light is now the horizon's line:
No more the old recession of the unknown—
But inexhaustible Truth goes goldening on
From depth to blissful depth of the Divine.

Intimate immensitudes no flesh can thwart
Drown the old poignancies of far and near:
Wonderful waters widening everywhere
Pulse in each breast the whole universe's heart.

K.D.Sethna

THE OLD GIVES WAY TO THE NEW

Devouring, trampling Time keeps pressing on,
Worn or shorn the old gives way to the new,
Each moment bares the world in a fresher hue
Till that too fades, that too is wiped off, blown
To a dim past and Nature sets out upon
Virginal ventures, so the Eternal's view
Wake fresh to man's spirit, with each eschew
Of sleep a purer happier bright world dawn.

Time's wheel and Nature's march slow not their pace,
But on moves too the sleepless timeless Soul
And tranquil guides their rocking whirling race.
The world is a close-cohesioned field of strife
Where many mysteries hour by hour unroll
Revealing God through dusk and husk of Life.

Har Krishan Singh

THE UNPUBLISHED WRITINGS OF ARJAVA
(J. A. CHADWICK)

WILH SRI AUROBINDO'S COMMENTS

(*Series 6*)

TO A KING[1]

THE rhythmic to-and-fro, the saw of Time
Whose forward stroke is day ; with tumbled stars
As sawdust on the floor ; and rough-cut bars
Of finished things chalked up with scrawls of rhyme.
Yet not these scantlings of the past I sing,
But one approved by eager throngs of men
Scanning horizons turned less hopeless when
His lines of fate ordained he should be king.

Mantle of kingship, not easy to be borne
Nor lightly to be touched by hands profane ;
One closer to us, by whom the mantle's worn,
Whose eyes take heed of the wrongs and ills that stain,
Whose will and heart uphold all who'd rebuild
The fairer England callousness had killed.

4-11-1936

Sri Aurobindo's Comment :

"A very fine and powerful sonnet—admirable in form and perfect in its force of expression."

[1] Edward, afterwards Duke of Windsor.

THE SURREALIST CONTRACTS OUT

The earwig is awake.
Who has awoken the earwig ?
It is the intertwining dust of infinitesimal centuries.
And of all distances
The greatest
Is nothingness.

The earwig is awake.
Who has awoken the earwig ?
It is the dithering dust of intertwining centuries.
In the vanity bag
They have all crumbled away.
It is the dismay
Of receding centuries,
Aeon dust.

The north pole of the expanding universe
Meets the south
At infinity.

Infinity is a point
Too far to be far.
Which point ?
Not this point, the other one...
But you always knew.

18-3-1937

Sri Aurobindo's Comment :

"Very good surrealism indeed. It fathoms deeps too deep to be anywhere the spaceless Everywhere."

SURREALIST POEM

Anywhere is a pincushion.
Tomorrow is the giraffe's breakfast.
The Archbishop can rebuke Kings but not profiteers.

The Chancellor's speech was the Flying Boat's pyjamas.
But the Express Train wears a nightshirt.

As upright as the arm of a Swastika.

The least Budget overdraft for feeding babies is 'unsound finance' but a large one for killing them can be taken in the Money Market's stride.

Officially, the German pastor committed suicide in the Concentration Camp.
Printing House Square cultivates philosophic doubt.
The Papal pot is too busy denouncing the Communist kettle.
Frank Buchman thanks God for Hitler.
In the City
Both Buchmans and Vaticans are "up".

Sri Aurobindo's Comment :

"Surrealist poems are as consequent as that ? Except for the philosophy of the opening line and the symbolism of the second, it is a very pregnant digest and 'criticism of life' with a panorama of the world's 'significant' news as its subject. But I suppose since the present life of the world is a very bad dream and a mad one at that, the epithet is justifiable."

"ITALY IS NOT SENDING A SPECIAL DELEGATION TO THE CORONATION OF KING GEORGE"

The locomotive champed the night air
And tried to leave the station...
The Capronia got there first.

Yes, in that big hole
(Now filled with Thames flood water)
They began to hold a Coronation once.
All the other nations sent representatives.
But Il Duce,
Most thoughtfully,
Proffered bombs-blessed-by-the-Vatican
Instead,
Sending them specially all the way by air.

But the subsequent felicitations
By the Holy Father
Of his "great and good people"
Caused more rejoicing in Hell.

21-3-1937

Sri Aurobindo's Comment :

"Very well turned."

A FABLE FROM THE NEW PHYSICS

Now the Arch-Misery was more subtle than all the beasts of Big Business. And he had the charge of the eighth electron. But the eighth electron was wandering from the prescribed orbit and promoting social justice. Thereupon the High Priests of Mammon had sundry Confidential Talks with the Arch-Misery, speaking after this wise : "Our eighth electron Will Not Do. Confidence is disturbed. The Eighth Electron Must Go." To which the Arch-Misery answered : "Money has spoken and Its behests shall surely be brought to pass." Now as it chanced, the eighth elecron was at times entering the domain of a very gracious and cultivated positron. And this positron was about to become a Divorced Person. So the Arch-Misery commanded that all restraints should be removed from the Press in Northern America, while the Press in Britain should be strictly muzzled. Then the Arch-Misery drew near unto the eighth electron and said : "Will not Your Majesty consent to keep within the orbit prescribed by all the Atoms of Conventionality ?" But the eighth electron answered and said : "I will consent to remain neither within the orbit of the Turf nor within that of Attending Divine Service nor within that of Cultivating the Acquaintance of Crashing Bores nor within that of Keeping a Mistress on the Sly." Whereupon the Arch-Misery declaimed: "Sire, this is most grievous news." And the tears of the Arch-Misery were as the tears of a crocodile. And the Arch-Misery forthwith commanded that the Press in Britain be unmuzzled. But the unmuzzling of the Press in Britain brought grievous bewilderment upon the good-hearted but slow-witted subjects of the eighth electron. And before any right decision could be come to by the slow-witted subjects, the subtle Arch-Misery had hustled the eighth electron right out of the world of Crowned Existence. Likewise the gracious and cultivated positron was taken out of the world of unmarried divorced persons. And the fame of their sacrifice and sensibility and charm was flashed to the East and flashed to the West. For that fame was as two photons.

5-4-1937

Sri Aurobindo's Comment :

"Very clever and admirably written."

ODE TO CORONATION

(Dedicated to the 'National Government', and with the customary apologies to Keats).

Season of snobs and gullibles and worse,
Close neighbour to the Sunday School Treat Bun;
Conspiring with him how to goad and curse
With dope the wires that round the seabed run;
To load the coin against Election's toss,
And fill all news with falsehood to the core;
To swell the bomb, and plump the eight-inch shells
With a rich kernel; to set flowing more,
And still more, later profits for the Boss,
Until he thinks there's no such word as Loss,
For Neville has o'erbrimmed his Money hells.

Who hath not seen thee oft amid thy store ?
Sometimes whoever seeks abroad may strike
Thee strutting mitred on an abbey floor,
Thy voice well flattered by the mellowing mike;
Or on a half-reap'd profit sound asleep,
Drowsed by the boom in metals, while thy firm
Garners the lucre of an unpaid tax :
And sometimes like a peeress thou dost keep
Steady thy empty head beneath a "perm";
Or at a Big Tattoo, the Public Worm,
Thou watchest Waste that meets no threatening Axe.

Where are the charms of Truth ? Ay, where are they ?
Think not of them, thou hast thy ballyhoo—
The words of wile wending their wireless way
To touch the Empire plains red, white and blue;
Then in a racking choir the tanklets nip
Among the chalky downlands, borne aloft
Or sinking as the soldier robot guides;
And full-bored guns loud boom from costly ship;
Archbishops purr; and (all disloyalty doffed)
Announcers burble from the Broadcast croft;
And gathering bombers glitter on all sides.

5-6-1937

Sri Aurobindo's Comment

"To whom does the 'he' refer in the 3rd line ? The satire of the parody is very pungent."

DEFINITIONS

O Britain, how I fain would be
An uninhabitant of thee.
Lord H. has said he 'deprecates'
Coercing of unguarded States
By Hitler's deeds which overawe
The weak and snarl contempt for Law.
In words the British "greatness" lay:
The Cabinet for half a day
"Discussed the situation"; they
Will "make a statement" by next week
And hear the House of Commons speak.
The F.O. drop "strong protests" in
The mocking letter-box, Berlin.
Glib Simon and Lord H, who prays
Shall dope the people with self-praise;
Their Chief, the Brummagem of soul,
Speaks of his country's 'single goal'—
"To localise the war" (of course
That means to legalise Brute Force,
Disown the Covenant line by line
And play the traitor)...We'll define
What is "a Treaty", what is "pax":—
"Things broken by Lord Halifax".

15 3-1938

Sri Aurobindo's Comment:

"Very telling and to the point."

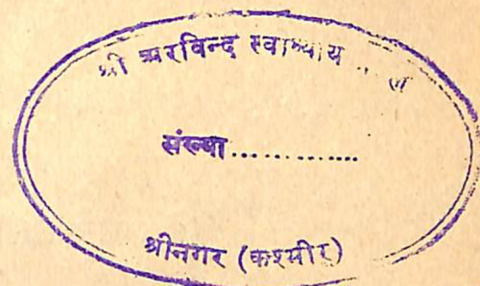
THE BAD ORDER CHANGETH YIELDING PLACE TO WORSE

Ousted are Moloch and Assyria's bull, you say ?-
Only to let the Crooked Cross hold sway,
Hammer and Sickle, or brutish lictor's rods;
These gain your adoration, these your gods !

The air is full of question and suspense:
Entombed by mounded aeons' barrow-grave
So perfect rounds of newly-minted pence—
Moon-fulnesses, dead empires of the wave.

Sri Aurobindo's Comment :

"The lines are very vigorous and expressive."



FLYING SPARKS

1) Yogic work is always a means and never the end of sadhana—means, in the beginning, to a dynamic union with the Divine, and, after the union is achieved, to the fulfilment of His Will in the world. The end, the solitary end, is the Divine. But to seek that end without this means is to miss half of the Divine's divinity.

2) Our desires desire all things except the All-desirable.

3) Life's purpose has not been served if Life's Life has not been discovered and lived.

4) To bother about one's own progress is the wrong way to advance.

5) The sun of knowledge rises in the sky of aspiring silence.

6) To cloak our imperfections is to render them more hideous.

7) Sink not your love of God in your love of freedom, nay, not even in that of self-perfection.

8) Life's barque would glide dancing upon the waters of consciousness, if the storms of passions did not tear its sails asunder.

9) Without power love is a soft-hearted cripple, purity a bloodless virgin, and peace a sterile blank of repose. But without love, purity and peace, power is a blind demon raging and ravaging on its way to self-destruction.

10) The best homage you can pay to greatness is to reproduce it in yourself.

11) Where sympathy is lacking, criticism is but carping.

12) Neglect of details may lead to the neglect of essentials.

RISHABHCHAND

IS OUR CHRONOLOGY FOR ANCIENT INDIA CORRECT ?

Some Criticisms and Suggestions

5

IN dealing with the remainder of the case for putting Asoka in the third century B.C., a small yet not insignificant thing to be noted at the very start is that out of the two Greek ambassadors sent after Megasthenes, Deimachus is declared to have been despatched to the son of Sandrocottus whom Strabo calls Allitrochades or Amitrochades[1] and Athenaeus names Amitrachates[2], while, as Vincent Smith has remarked, Dionysius is mentioned by Pliny without saying to whom at the Indian court he presented his credentials.[3] Rapson too notes : "Of a third ambassador who came to India from the West during this period we know merely the name—Deimachus—and that he was sent from the court of Ptolemy Philadelphus, king of Egypt."[4] The name given to the son of Sandrocottus is considered by Fleet and Charpentier the Greek's echo to *Amitrakhāda* ("devourer of enemies"); Raychaudhuri equates it with *Amitraghāta* ("slayer of enemies") and Barua with *Amitrasvāti* ("terror to enemies"); one may add *Amitrajetā* ("conqueror of enemies") and *Amitrachchhetā* ("mower of enemies"). But why should Chandragupta Maurya's son Bindusara be said to have been meant by it ? His name has not the vaguest resemblance to it. Can we think of him as having borne it as at least a title ? There is not a shred of serious evidence that he was ever known by such a title or even deserved it. Taranatha makes him overthrow sixteen kingdoms, but, as Barua puts it, "what reliance can be placed on the evidence of so late a chronicler as Tārānātha ?"[5] "Asoka's father Bindusara", says R. K. Mookerji[6], "is not known to history as a conqueror." The passages where the ambassadors are mentioned supply no hint about Bindusara. As for Asoka, the Greek writers do not even refer to the grandson

[1] II, p. 70 (Fragment T9, Note).
[2] Raychaudhuri, *The Political History of Ancient India*, p. 202.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Ancient India*, p. 104 (Cambridge, 1916).
[5] *Asoka and His Inscriptions* p. 309, footnote 4.
[6] *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 61.

of Sandrocottus, leave aside giving any name which we may attempt to equate with "Asoka".[1]

If, in spite of this, we insist on believing, as our historians do, that the Mauryan court received in succession Megasthenes, Deimachus and Dionysius, what shall we make of an oddity our historians are forced to recount ? After assuming that three ambassadors from the Greek kings had paid homage to the Mauryas, Barua[2] says : "These facts are recorded by the Greek writers and ignored in Indian literature. Similarly Asoka records the fact of despatch of envoys by him to the courts and territories of his five Greek 'frontagers', and the Greek writers ignore it." Instead of feeling this reciprocal ignoring to be rather out of order, Barua continues : "The exchange of envoys by way of reciprocation of courtesy on either side was only too natural under the circumstances to be disbelieved." It must be strange courtesy indeed to receive envoys and completely overlook them and make much of one's own envoys sent abroad. If there is an overlooking on only one side, we may conjecture some reason. But when it is on both sides, should not the presumption be that the parties we have supposed to have exchanged envoys did not really do so because the Greek kings must have sent theirs to an Indian court other than the Mauryan and Asoka must have despatched his to other kings than the Greek ? Our historians appear almost to think that if there was a tit for tat in the matter of ignoring ambassadors the exchange of them is doubly proved.

What rests still more significantly unproved is that Prolemy II Philadelphus, who sent Dionysius and had dealings with India or matters Indian, had any connection with the activities which Asoka claimed to have carried out far and wide : the promulgation of the Buddhist *dhamma* and the establishment of institutions for the medical care of men and animals. Athenaeus tells us that in the processions of this Greek king of Egypt were to be seen Indian women, Indian hunting dogs and Indian cows and also Indian spices carried on camels,[3] but nowhere does he mention any *dhamma-dūtas* in Egypt or any institutions from India set up there for merciful service of ailing men and animals. We know on the authority of Epiphanius that the Head of the Alexandrine Library which had been founded or expanded by Ptolemy Philadelphus was anxious to translate the books of the Hindus,[4] yet again nothing Asokan is hinted: the Buddhist *dhamma* and its ministrations are not heard of. The same total ignorance of Asokan activities is evinced in the histories of all the other four Greek kings supposed to be enumerated by Asoka. Asoka's claims about his *dhamma* and about

[1] Rhys Davids, *Buddhist India*, p. 81: "The Greeks do not mention Asoka."

[2] *Asoka and his Inscriptions*, pp. 327-8.

[3] *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 616.

[4] Bhandarkar, *Asoka*, p. 163.

his humanitarian institutions are not borne out in the least degree. We have been told : "To find the names of five Greek kings, who were contemporaries of one another, answering to the sounds in Asoka's list of his Yavana contemporaries cannot be put down to fanciful preconception on our part : the probability that a fivefold correspondence in one place is purely accidental reduces to as good as zero." We have shown how imperfect the correspondence is; but even if it were less so, it would be well to remember against it the ignoring of Asoka's missionary claims by every one of the five Greek kings whom our historians have traced. Such a fivefold ignoring is, as Pandit Venkatachalam has emphasised[1], no small event, especially when histories have been left us of all these princes. And the probability that this ignoring is purely accidental seems reduced to even less than zero by the fact that the Greeks *en masse* knew nothing of Buddhism until the rise of the city of Alexandria in the Christian Era : the first Greek writer to refer to Buddha is Clement of Alexandria who lived from 150 to 218 A.D.[2]

Of course Asoka did not say specifically that the Greek kings themselves came under his Buddhist influence nor that their Greek subjects did. As Bhandarkar has argued against Rhys Davids who dubbed the Edict's reference to it in regard to the countries of the Yona rajas "royal rhodomontade", there were numerous non-Greeks under the Greek kings and, if they were affected, Asoka would be free from the slur of being exaggerative and vain. No doubt, Buddhism did affect the Middle East. The religious bodies known as the Essenes and the Theraputae and the early Christians themselves were affected in subtle ways. And even ostensible Buddhism has been attested by Alberuni to have spread later : he observed in the eleventh century A.D., "In former times Khorasan, Persia, Iraq, Mosul and the country up to the frontier of Syria were Buddhistic."[3] But the extent to which the common people in even nearer and less Greek places than Macedonia and Epirus, places like Syria, Egypt and Cyrene, were familiar in the third century B.C. with specific Buddhist ideas and institutions cannot be gauged from the documents at our disposal. Rather, we should confess we have no documents to show any familiarity—when we should expect to have plenty, in view of that grand phrase of the Edict after mentioning the kingdoms of Amtiyoka, Tulamaya, Amtekini, Maga and Alikasudara together with southern territories and Asoka's own empire : "Everywhere they follow the teaching of the Beloved of the gods in respect of *Dhamma*." Here a phenomenon is spoken of, whose light cannot at all be blinked, and the light must be brilliant indeed if the next phrase, which in

[1] *The Plot in Indian Chronology*, pp. 131-2.
[2] *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 616.
[3] *Ibid.*

contrast is about countries without express Asokan missionaries, could run: "Even where the envoys of the Beloved of the gods do not go, they, hearing the utterance of *Dhamma*, the ordinances and the instructions in *Dhamma* of the Beloved of the gods, practise *Dhamma* and will so practise." The phrase in the earlier Edict—which too concerns itself with not only Asoka's own dominions but also the states of frontier sovereigns including Amtiyoka and the rest—bespeaks an equally attention-drawing phenomenon: "Everywhere has King Priyadarsin, Beloved of the gods, established medical treatment of two kinds, medical treatment for men and medical treatment for animals." When we find no notice of any sort taken of all these high claims, no hint of even elementary contact with any missionary work, we are driven to conclude not merely that Asoka indulged in "royal rhodomontade" while getting some results achieved, but that his activities had nothing to do with even Syria, Egypt and Cyrene under the Greeks (leave aside Macedonia and Epirus) because his date was remote from the time of the Greek rulers with whom we have linked him.

What about the "Buddha-head" found in Memphis and dated by Sir Flinders Petrie as far back as the fifth century B.C. when that city was the capital of Egypt under the Persians? Does it not show sufficient Buddhist influence in the land of Ptolemy II Philadelphus? Well, whatever influence may be shown by it was not due to Asoka's activities or to any similar missionary work which might bring the *Dhamma* into prominence and keep it in the public eye until the middle of the third century B.C. when Ptolemy ruled over Egypt. If the head (with Gurkha features) is really of Buddha, the influence was not of the kind with which we are concerned but of an accidental, limited, private and temporary nature, for this head is connected by Sir Flinders with members of a hypothetical Indian component of the Memphis-garrison which, according to Herodotus who visited the city in 453 B.C., consisted largely of Persians but also of "others"—a small component which T. Balakrishnan Nayar, discussing the find, considers to have left in 405 B.C. (long before the time of Philadelphus): "When the Persian occupation ceased, the Indian colony at Memphis also would have ceased."[1]

In India itself of about 300 B.C., a little before Asoka's supposed reign-period, we have no indication of any markedly Buddhist activity. Asoka[2] employs the words "Brahmanas" and "Sramanas" as broad terms for holy men who have renounced the household life and when he specifically talks of the Buddhists he calls them Samghasthas, just as he calls the Jains Nigranthas. When Clement of Alexandria refers to Buddha, the Buddhists are, as Colebrooke

[1] The *Hindu* (Sunday edition, date not traceable).

[2] Barua, *Asoka and His Inscriptions*, p. 238.

has pointed out, clearly distinguished from the "Brachmanes" and the "Sarmanes"[1]: labelling the Sarmanes as the Hylobioi ("forest-dwellers"), he marks out the followers of "Boutta" from the general body of the Hylobioi.[2] But when Megasthenes who had first-hand acquaintance with India speaks of Brachmanes and Sarmanes he seems to be unaware of Buddhism as distinguished from Hinduism. Bevan[3] remarks: "It has been thought that we have in the *Sarmanes* of Megasthenes the first mention of Buddhists by Western writers. In the description, however, there is nothing distinctively Buddhist and the term *Śramana* is used in Indian literature of non-Buddhist sects. If, therefore, the people to whom Megasthenes heard the term applied were Buddhist he must have known so little about them that he could only describe them by features which were equally found in various sorts of Hindu holy men. His description applies to Brahmin ascetics rather than to Buddhists." Mookerji[4] adds that from the description of these *Śramanas* they appear to be Brahmins of the third and fourth *Aśramas* and known as *Parivrājakas* and *Sannyāsīs*."

The failure of Buddhism to stand out at all to the eyes of Megasthenes or to those of the other Greek writers—before Clement—who have drawn upon his work is especially puzzling because he lists among the intellectual and religious classes of India not only the Brachmanes and Sarmanes but also the Philosophers, Sophists, Pramnai (*Prāmānikas*) and Gymnetai; he mentions more than one particular religious practice — the worship of a Bacchanalian god by the Oxydrakai (Kshudrakas) and of Heracles (apparently Siva) by the Sibae[5] and of Krishna under the name of Heracles at Mathura.[6] But the Buddhists could not impress on him any characteristics. Immediately before Asoka's day they were sufficiently in prominence and immediately after him still more. How then are we to explain the fact stated by McCrindle[7]: "It is indeed a remarkable circumstance that the religion of Buddha should never have been expressly noticed by the Greek authors..."? McCrindle's own explanation is that the appearance and manners of its followers were not so peculiar as to enable a foreigner to distinguish them from the mass of the people. But, surely, if even in far Alexandria Clement could distinguish them, Megasthenes in Pataliputra which was situated in the Buddhist Midland

[1] Mookerji, *Chandragupta Maurya and His Times*, p. 304.
[2] Barua. *Op. cit.*, p. 240.
[3] *The Cambridge History of India*, I. p. 238.
[4] *Op. cit.*, p. 300.
[5] Barua, *Op. cit.*, p. 315.
[6] McCrindle, *Ancient India as Described by Megasthenes and Arrian*, p. 201.
[7] Quoted by Mookerji, *Op. cit.*, pp. 301-2.

should have given a hint. The most reasonable conclusion from the lack of it is that the time of Sandrocottus cannot be looked upon as the religious background we should expect if Asoka were his grandson. The years just prior to what is taken to be Asoka's reign evince no markedly Buddhist activity in even the home of Buddhism, leave aside foreign countries.

We may now move to another topic. It is rather curious that Asoka should mention just those five kings and no others. People do not as a rule realise that these kings were not the only Greeks he could have mentioned. Mookerji has remarked after choosing Alexander of Epirus and not Alexander of Corinth for Alikasudara : "There were several kings of Asia Minor of equal and higher status whom Asoka should have mentioned such as Eumenes of Pergamon (262-240 B.C.) or, nearer home, Diodotus of Bactria."[1] We may add Arsaces of Parthia, but it appears that he and Diodotus, though certainly powerful, were merely governors whose overlord was Antiochus II until 250 B.C. when they revolted and became independent. As Asoka's edict may be supposed to have been promulgated between 259 and 256 B.C., he can on that supposition be considered correct in omitting them. But the omission of a king like Eumenes I who was already in full power in that period is inexplicable in view of Asoka's zeal for his *Dhamma*. If the Greek kings neither had any connection with Asoka nor even were his contemporaries, the question would not arise at all.

Perhaps we shall be countered with the plea : "It appears that in spite of his ruling for over twenty years Eumenes I of Pergamon was never acknowledged to be a king, as was Eumenes II who came some time later. Websters's *Biographical Dictionary*[2] makes that point." As against Webster, we have *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia* and *The New Gresham Encyclopaedia* which distinctly call him king.[3] The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* calls both Eumenes I and Eumenes II rulers of Pergamon without remarking that the former was never recognised as being on the throne: it does not call him king, as it does the latter, but it still speaks of his "reign".[4] The explanation of this is to be found in the remark of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* that Eumenes I did not assume the title of king as his successor Attalus I did.[5] There seems to have been no question of not being *recognised* as king. In any case, the point is rather nominal, for Pergamon had been independent since 283 B.C.[6] and, whether self-entitled king or no, Eumenes I ruled his state like one and proved his power by defeating at Sardis

[1] *Chandragupta Maurya and His Times*, p. 74.
[2] P. 494.
[3] Vol. 5, p. 588; Vol. 4, p. 316.
[4] Vol. IX, p. 889, (Thirteenth Edition).
[5] Vol. XXI, p. 143.
[6] *Ibid.*

in 262 B.C. the accredited king Antiochus I of Syria, the father of the Antiochus our historians have made Asoka's "frontager".

The argument that the five kings are introduced in an orderly manner keeping in view the contiguity of their territories and that this procedure answers exactly to the actual disposition of Syria, Egypt, Macedonia. Cyrene and Epirus under the Greek rulers is not really cogent. It is rather forced. It makes too much play with the notion of "frontager" as if Asoka in enumerating the kings were preoccupied with the idea of logically proving them "frontagers" to one another and were attending most conscientiously to geographical proprieties of relative situation. But in R.E. II he is so forgetful of these proprieties that he does not differentiate for us between south and west or north-west: "Everywhere in the dominions of King Priyadarsin, Beloved of the gods, as well as those of his frontier sovereigns, such as the Chodas, Pandyas, Satyaputra, Keralaputra, as far as the Tamraparni, the Yona King called Amtiyoka and also those who are the neighbours of Amtiyoka..."[1] Amtiyoka seems to lie beyond the Tamraparni—in at least the remote south if not farther than Ceylon. No acute geographer would have allowed such an inference.

And the inference is all the more natural because, over and above the absence of any indication that a switch from the extreme south to the west or north-west has suddenly been made, there is the absence of a logical order in the switch itself: if a strict sequence southward had been observed and then a movement upward along the south-west had been started to reach Amtiyoka and his neighbours, we might have granted at least some method in the irresponsibility, but Asoka, after listing the Chodas and Pandyas, breaks the southward movement and, instead of going down to Tamraparni, shifts to the west for the Satyaputra and Keralaputra and then drops to the extreme south and finally jumps abruptly upward. We have not only a lack of warning about the long leap in the opposite direction: we have also a most ungeographical break in the clockwise sequence which could easily have been effected in the down and up.

Even in R.E. XIII the shift from the Yavana rajas to "the Chodas, the Pandyas, as far as the Tamraparniyas" in the south is not unequivocally brought about, as commonly believed, with the help of an intervening expression such as Bhandarkar gives us: "(likewise) down below". What he translates by this phrase is just the word "nicha" which means "low" or "below" or "down" but is not at all a clear sign of the southern. Mookerji has remarked: "The meaning of the word does not seem to be satisfactorily settled."[2] To

[1] Bhandarkar, *Asoka*, p. 229.
[2] *Asoka*, p. 166, footnote 2.

call the south "down below" is not immediately rational unless we think in the artificial terms of a map where the lower side is made to represent the south. We may be sure that Asoka was not thinking with so modern a device of geographical representation. In Indian thought the equation of "low" or "below" or "down" with the south happens by a secondary association : the regions of the God of death, Yama, which are supposed to be underground are said to be reached by a movement southward. The primary association of "nicha" has nothing to do with the south and would prompt in the Asokan context by its occurrence just after the names of the other four rajas and before the mention of the Chodas-Pandyas the rendering : "inferior" or "subordinate". This rendering is usually set aside because Ptolemy, Antigonus, Magas and Alexander of Epirus are known not to have been subordinate to Antiochus. But it may be worth noting, in support of this rendering, that the word "sāmamta" which in R.E. II is used for the four kings mentioned with Amtiyoka without being individually named has been translated by Bühler : "vassal-kings". Bhandarkar and others write "neighbours" because the Girnar version gives "sāmīp(am)". The idea of neighbourhood cannot be denied, but, since all the other versions give "sāmamta", perhaps the complete interpretation should be something like "vassal-neighbours". And then we would hardly have an alternative to rendering "nicha" by "inferior" or "subordinate"—unless we think of the tribe called Nicha in the Markandeya Purana, which may be the same as the one called Nichya in the *Aitareya Brahmana*. Can we, however, think of that tribe ? If Asoka be taken as the grandson of Sandrocottus and a contemporary of Macedonian kings, this tribe would fall within his empire's sweep up to Herat as well as over Baluchistan and not figure, like the Chodas and Pandyas, among frontagers. If he has nothing to do with Sandrocottus and those kings, it can figure there and the word would more probably mean them than be a southward pointer. In any case, if we approach the word impartially and with no preconception we shall have a historical situation scarcely agreeing with the Greek state of affairs, or the Indian, in 259-256 B.C. and also scarcely showing a geographical acuity or scruple on Asoka's part such as the rendering "down below" may suggest.

So much for the forced play with the notion of "frontager". Now a word about making every frontager "Greek". The extra ingenuity introduced by the idea of "Greek frontager" has the look of an attempt to save a desperate situation. It implies the sense that the kings are not actually frontagers of one another and can be made such only by ignoring territories that may lie between theirs and by thinking exclusively in terms of Greeks. This would be sophistry —and even as sophistry the whole argument would not stand up in every case, for the Macedonia of Antogonus is not the nearest Greek country, on the

north-west, to the Syria of Antiochus. The Pergamon of Eumenes, the king inexplicably omitted by Asoka, comes before Macedonia and spoils the curiously planned picture. Even if we considered Eumenes an undeclared king, Pergamon would yet be an intervening Greek territory whose master was neither the Syria-dominating Antiochus nor the Macedonia-ruling Antigonus.

We may next question the argument from the date of Rock Edict XIII. Most historians accept the thirteen years suggested by Senart as the interval between it and Asoka's coronation. But Bhandarkar[1] has noted a cogent objection by Harit Krishna Deb, author of *Asoka's Dhammalipis*. He sums up Deb's objection as follows : "Pillar Edict VII is dated in the twenty-seventh year and is admitted by all to be a *resumé* of the multifarious measures which Asoka adopted till that year for the dissemination of his *Dhamma*. It is puerile to suppose that P.E. VII is a mere *resumé* of the domestic measures he adopted for his subjects, and not also of what he did for foreign peoples. The field of Asoka's activity is all mankind, and he never draws any factitious distinction between his subjects and foreign peoples so far as *Dhamma* is concerned, his ideal being that of Chakravarti Dharmika Dharmaraja. The carrying out of philanthropic works (R.E. II) and the propagation of *Dhamma* (R.E. XIII) in the realm of the Greek rulers are such important things that Asoka would most certainly have made mention of them in P.E. VII, if they had met with any appreciable measure of success in those foreign countries. The omission is significant and shows that Rock Edicts II and XIII could not have been promulgated prior to P.E. VII, that is, the twenty-seventh regnal year."

Vincent Smith, though a follower of Senart, was yet aware of the difficulty and confessed : "I cannot explain the failure to commemorate the foreign missions which occupy a prominent place in the Rock Edicts."[2]

Bhandarkar adds three arguments in Deb's support. The first points out that Senart's "thirteen years after coronation" marks only the lower limit : what is proved is merely that Rock Edict XIII could not have been promulgated before this time and hardly that it could not have been promulgated after it. "It is true", says Bhandarkar about the Fourteen Rock Edicts, "that no less than four different dates are found mentioned in this series (R.E. IV, V, VIII and XIII), but it is nowhere stated that this whole set of *Dhammalipis* or any component thereof was inscribed in any particular year. They are dates of the different events alluded to in the different parts of this series, and not of the actual engraving. The latest of these is the thirteenth year of Asoka's reign and this has been proposed by Senart as the date when the Fourteen

[1] *Asoka*, p. 50.
[2] *An Early History of India*, p. 169.

Rock Edicts were incised. The French savant, it is true, has been followed by other scholars, both Indian and European. But this date cannot reasonably be taken as the actual date of the inscribing. All that we can logically conclude is not that the whole set was engraved in the thirteenth regnal year, but only that it could not have been engraved before that year. We have, therefore, to fix the date for this series on independent grounds."[1]

The second argument runs more directly in favour of Deb's conclusion, though it may seem to overshoot the mark : "After giving the date of its promulgation P.E. VII ends thus : 'Thus the Beloved of the gods saith : this Dhammalipi should be inscribed where there are stone pillars or stone tablets so that it may long endure.' This clearly shows that whatever records he had already engraved were engraved on stone pillars and stone tablets only. There is indeed no reference here to the inscribing of *Dhammalipis* on *parvatas* or rocks. The idea does not seem to have occured to him until after the twenty-seventh year of his reign, the date of P.E. VII. This shows that all the Rock Edicts, whether they were the Fourteen Rock Edicts or the Minor Rock Edicts, must have been engraved when the work of inscribing the seven Pillar Edicts came to an end."[2] This conclusion, though not in accord with Senart's chronology, is strengthened by his opinion on the time-sequence of the Fourteen Rock Edicts. Bhandarkar says : "Senart has adduced some solid grounds to prove that this series of Rock Edicts forms one *ensemble* and was not engraved in successive additions."[3]

Bhandarkar's third argument is also from internal evidence. "Asoka", he writes, "does not seem to have been able to carry out his whole programme of inscribing his edicts. He orders P.E. VII to be engraved on stone pillars and stone slabs. But so far as we can see it was incised only on one pillar, viz. the Delhi-Topra Pillar. As to stone slabs, none has been found with this edict inscribed on it. Probably none was engraved. Similarly, he intended inscribing Minor Rock Edicts on stone columns, but this too does not seem to have been done. It does appear after all that Asoka commenced this work rather late in his life and was not able to carry through his whole programme of inscribing his *Dhammalipis*."[4]

Mookerji has made an attempt at controverting Bhandarkar by way of refuting his whole position about the Rock Edicts. We must in fairness quote it. "Arguments from silence," says Mookerji,[5] "are always unreliable and in

[1] *Asoka*, pp. 286-7.
[2] *Asoka*, p. 288.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 283.
[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 289-90.
[5] *Asoka*, pp. 41-2.

the present case seem to be specially so. What is stated about the scope or intention of P.E. VII is not stated in the Edict itself, but is a mere assumption. It is inferred from the contents of the Edict. The contents would rather lead one to infer that the Edict was meant to be a *resumé* of the various domestic measures introduced by Asoka for the moral uplift of his own people, and not of what he had done for foreign peoples. All these, which are also mentioned in the R.E., are mentioned in this Edict with a degree of elaboration and generalisation that is almost a sure indication that it was issued later than the R. E. The chief officers mentioned in the R. E., viz, the Rājūkas and the Dharma-Mahāmātras, are also mentioned in P.E. VII; and the function of these newly-created Dharma-Mahāmātras which are fully described in R.E.V are summarised in P.E. VII; the information about the public works of utility consisting of 'wells and trees planted along the roads for the needs of both man and beast', as given in R.E. II, is elaborated and supplemented in P.E. VII in a manner that undoubtedly points to the latter being later than the former; lastly, as instances of generalisation and reference in the P.E. VII to the R.E. may be mentioned the statement that for the spread of the Dharma Asoka had religious messages (*dhamma-sāvanāni*) proclaimed (*sāvāpitāni*) and religious injunctions (*dhammānusathini vividhāni*) ordained (*ānapitāni*) along with his Pillars of Piety (*dhammathambhāni*) and the special officers to preach and expound (*paliyovadisamti pavithalisamti*) the Dhamma. There is also the other generalised statement in the same Edict that the growth in Dharma of the people may be accomplished in two ways, by *Dhamma-niyama*, by regulation, and by *Nijhati*, reflection. Thus the contents of P.E. VII, viewed as a whole, show without doubt that it is meant to sum up Asoka's moral measures for his people, and, as such, it was the last of his edicts. Above all, arguments from the inclusion or omission of certain matters in the two classes of Edicts cannot be conclusive. Does not Asoka himself warn us on the point—'Nacha sarvam sarvatra ghatitam', 'nor is all suitable in all places' ?"

In appraising the force of Mookerji's criticism we may begin by noting that Barua[1] who does not see eye to eye with Bhandarkar is yet unconvinced that Pillar Edict VII is the last edict of Asoka. He finds reason to place the two inscriptions that are called Separate Rock Edicts later than it. And he also places what is known as the Minor Rock Edict between it and the first six Pillar Edicts. Bhandarkar therefore does not appear to be completely vulnerable at Mookerji's hands. Is he vulnerable even where Barua and Mookerji agree ? Are there factors in Bhandarkar's favour, which they have failed to reckon with ? We are concerned merely with Rock Edicts II and XIII

[1] *Asoka and His Inscriptions*, Part II, pp. 10-18.

and need not bother about the rest of Bhandarkar's case. And in relation to them we may say, first of all, that if Asoka's domestic measures for the sake of dhamma deserve in his twenty-seventh year a *resumé* and if the foreign missions date so far back as his thirteenth year we have every right to expect a *resumé* of them also at more or less the same time. P.E. VII may have been meant to be confined to domestic measures of dhamma and hence not summarise the foreign ones ; but then where is the summary of the latter ? The absence of such summary is a vacuum that demands to be filled. We have here no simple argument from silence : the silence is logically significant and suggestive —and the vacuum we have spoken of can be filled only by shifting the two edicts from their supposed place to after P.E. VII. There is no summary of the foreign missions either in P.E. VII or separately because there could have been no success worth mentioning earlier and summarising afterwards : the success must have come later and was embodied in what may be regarded as at once announcement and *resumé*.

Mookerji's argument from "elaboration and generalisation", though not quite negligible, is far from happy, for it is not consistently enforced by him. If elaboration is, as he holds, a sign of the subsequent, we should consider R.E. V later than P.E. VII because, on his own showing, the description of the "newly-created Dharma-Mahāmātras" is full in the former and skeletonic in the latter. Whether a piece of information is one or the other is hardly a vital issue : both are consistent with the nature of a *resumé*. What a *resumé* is essentially intended to do is to gather together scattered things in a final totting up : it may discharge this function in any way it likes. Nor is it always necessary that for it to mention things they must already have been mentioned elsewhere. If a new work has been done after the mention of several others in earlier edicts, it may figure straight away in the *resumé* as an additional feature. All that is needed is not previous mention but previous execution : Asoka is not gathering up things from his edicts so much as from his life. And Mookerji admits this when he talks of information being "supplemented". So the fact that P.E. VII informs us about "wells and trees planted along the roads for the needs of both man and beast" should not make us expect a similar piece of information before Asoka's twenty-seventh year. An edict like R.E. II which does contain such information is not necessarily earlier than P.E. VII. It may very well be later and repeat the information if a special context calls for repetition—as evidently the context of R.E. II does with its combination of the foreign works and the domestic. As for generalisations about the proclamation of religious messages and the ordainment of religious injunctions and special officers to preach and expound the dhamma, they only involve at the most that some Rock Edicts preceded P.E. VII and not necessarily that

P.E. VII was subsequent to the two inscriptions which concern us.

The plea that since Asoka warns us that all is not suitable in all places we should not make much of inclusion or omission of certain matters in the two classes of Edicts is as weak in the present case as the playing down of the argument from silence. All depends on the particular situation in which inclusion or omission is done. And against Mookerji's closing quotation from R.E. XIV (Girnar) we may pit another from the same source : "Puna puna vutam tasa tasa athasa madhurataya kimti jano tatha pati pajetha".—"Something is said again and again for the sweetness of the topics concerned..." "Surely to a king who said in the Kalinga R.E. I (Dhauli), "All men are my children", if the work of dhamma had been accomplished abroad before P.E. VII, it would have been sweet enough for a *resumé*-repetition just as much as dhamma-work achieved at home.

Mookerji's answer to Bhandarkar cannot be pronounced sufficiently effective. And it loses whatever small value it may have here and there when we weigh against it some considerations relating to the query : What number of years could the foreign missions have taken to reach the results mentioned in R.E.'s II and XIII ? Mookerji himself says[1] that the missionary activity in the foreign countries must date from an earlier time than the year assigned to these edicts and more so because it is described in the edicts as having already been successful and borne fruit. Face to face with the statement in R.E. XIII that the Kalinga war whose cruelties turned Asoka's mind actively and enthusiastically towards Buddhism was waged in his eighth regnal year, Mookerji who puts this edict in Asoka's thirteenth year knows that he cannot have more than five years for the development of the successful results. Five years seem too few to us, but Mookerji finds them adequate and we may grant that they cannot be immediately dismissed. What can be said by us legitimately is that Mookerji, on his premisses, is illogical in allowing even as many as five years on the evidence of the edicts. Apropos a statement in R.E. V, he has the following to tell us.[2] When Asoka "had been consecrated thirteen years" he instituted "a special body of officers...called by the new and appropriate title of *Dharma-Mahāmātras*....The activities of this department extended over a wide field, even beyond the limits of his direct jurisdiction or administration.... The department had also to send out some officers as *Dūtas*, envoys or ambassadors, carrying Asoka's religious message to foreign countries both in the north and the south." The point now is : If Asoka's special *dhamma*-work commenced after the appointment of the *Dharma-Mahāmātras* and if they alone exercised

[1] *Asoka*, p. 32.
[2] *Asoka*, p. 29.

the office of sending out religious ambassadors to foreign countries and if they were appointed only in the thirteenth year, how could Asoka's missionary activity in these countries be described, in an edict promulgated in the very year, as having already been successful and borne fruit in a spectacular manner ? Surely the time of less than a year is preposterously short. But nothing longer can be allowed if the edict came out in the thirteenth year which is the earliest possible for the origin of the *Dūtas*. Here Senart's theory meets with a *reductio ad absurdum*.

In another context Mookerji[1] himself has scored a similar point. He has declared about the translations and interpretations of a certain passage in the Minor Rock Edict, where Asoka mentions an achievement of his own and offers himself as an encouraging example to even the least : "All these translations and interpretations, however literal or true to text, do not yield much sense or significance. They only agree in ascribing to Asoka the credit of achieving the impossible. It is claimed for him that within the short space of 'a little more than a year' he was able to convert the wild tribes of India to Brahmanism and to impart to them a knowledge of its gods. It is also as an alternative claimed that within that short interval he was able to make the millions of India distinctly religious and godly, or to abolish the battle of creeds, the strife of sects, for which India is notorious to this day. In my opinion, these interpretations, besides condemning themselves by suggestions of the impossible, do a great injustice to the character of Asoka by letting him appear as a man given to vainglorious boasting." So Mookerji chooses to give a "subjective" interpretation : he makes Asoka say, "By a little more than a year's exertion, lo ! I have made such progress : it is, indeed, the men in Jambudvipa [the best country, according to the sacred texts, for spiritual life] who could thus have 'commerce with the gods' in such a short time. But let it not be understood that such progress is only for the great, like me..." Now, if a year's religious propaganda is taken to be absurdly inadequate for turning godlike the entire people of just one country, India, or even for making the wilder tribes acquainted with the gods or for harmonising the warring creeds, how infinitely unreasonable it is to believe Asoka to be recording a resounding triumph in dhamma-work not only at home but abroad in five countries in less than a year ! Here we cannot even choose a "subjective" interpretation. We have either to accept him literally and objectively as claiming the impossible and hence acting as a champion among fatuous braggarts or else dismiss unreservedly the thirteenth year for R. E.'s II and XIII.

Further, we have the dates given by the Ceylonese chronicles. These

[1] *Indian Culture,* Vol. I, pp. 66-68.

documents unanimously tell us that religious missions were sent during Asoka's reign to different "adjacent countries" in the seventeenth year after he had been crowned,[1] with the exception of the island of Ceylon to which a mission was despatched a year still later.[2] If this piece of information is correct, can the usual dating of R. E.'s II and XIII be maintained ? Would not their mention of the sending of *dhamma-dūtas* anticipate the actual event by four years ? Mookerji is aware of the testimony of the chronicles and even tells us that the Buddhist Council which sent the missions did so after a session of nine months.[3] This would make the anticipation almost five years earlier, proving Senart's thirteenth year still more ridiculous. But Mookerji does not so much as hint at any difficulty; for, taking Senart to be absolutely correct, he feels sure that the missions described by the *Mahāvamsa* and other books are not the same as those sent by Asoka. He says that Asoka's work was "extended" by them.[4] This is a surprising refusal to look facts in the face. Asoka's edicts do not speak of two acts of despatching religious missions abroad separated by several years; the Ceylonese chronicles do not speak of one despatch in the thirteenth year and the other in the seventeenth and eighteenth. Though there may not be agreement in some details, every sign is there of Asoka's missions being identical with those of the Buddhist Council. Hence we must declare the chronicles to be flatly contradictory of Senart.

The one difficulty in the way of accepting them arises from our doubt about the validity of Bhandarkar's general thesis that *all* the Fourteen Rock Edicts were promulgated after Asoka's twenty-seventh year. The doubt must prompt the questions : "If the missions went in the seventeenth year after coronation, why did Asoka have to wait for over ten years to record their successful results ? Could he not judge them to be a success before his twenty-seventh year so that he might commemorate it earlier or at least in Pillar Edict VII ?"

Two answers can be submitted. One is that the missions suddenly achieved their sweeping triumph at the end of a long labour and that this happy consummation took place after the Pillar Edict had been promulgated. The other brings in Asoka's quinquennial system as shown by Rock Edict III and Separate Rock Edict I—a system borne out by the Sarvastivada tradition in the *Divyāvadāna*.[5] Five years may be thought of as intervening between stage and stage of promulgating the *dhammalipis*. Then the stage before Pillar Edict VII, starting as it does with Pillar Edicts I-VI which date themselves in the twenty-

[1] *Dīpavamsa*, VIII, 1f; *Mahāvamsa*, XII, 1f; *Samanta-pāsādikā*, I, p. 63f.

[2] *Dīpavamsa*, XII, 16f; *Mahāvamsa*, XII, 1f; *Samanta-pāsādikā*, I, p. 69f.

[3] *Asoka*, pp. 34, 63.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 32.

[5] P. 45.

sixth regnal year, falls four years after the despatch of the missions. If this stage could not be taken advantage of, the sole recourse left would be the next —ten years after their despatch. We may reasonably assume that four years were too few for estimating definitively the full outcome of missionary work over a large area. Hence we simply must jump to the tenth year as the earliest possible for declaring the complete estimate.

Should either of these answers prove unacceptable, we would have to consider the Ceylonese chronicles inaccurate rather than go against the essence of Deb's inference from Pillar Edict VII. No objection to our jettisoning the chronicles' evidence can be raised by Senart's followers since they themselves cannot hold on to the thirteenth regnal year without jettisoning it. At least our action would be less arbitrary than theirs.

On Deb's inference the coronation goes back by at least fourteen years beyond the currently accepted date of it and then the reign-periods cited from the Puranas or the Buddhist books for Bindusara and Chandragupta would carry us beyond the earliest date possible for the coronation of Sandrocottus: twenty-seven years from the period between 259 and 256 B.C. when Rock Edict XIII is alleged to have been inscribed would give us 286-283 B.C. to fit Asoka's coronation into and if we add the Puranic reign-period of 25 and 24 years we reach 235-232 B.C. for the rise of Sandrocottus to the throne. The Ceylonese calculations, with their 28 years for Bindusara, take us farther back by three years. So the date-argument from Rock Edict XIII is highly vulnerable.

Even if we accept for Asoka the coronation-date resulting from Senart's suggestion, we may point out the lack of unanimity about the reign-periods in the Puranas and the Buddhist chronicles. The Indian authorities on the Puranas, who differ from the champions of Chandragupta, agree on 28 years for Bindusara and 34 for Chandragupta, and this they do without having in mind the argument from the date of Rock Edict XIII. T. S. Narayana Sastri says that the majority of the Puranas allot to Chandragupta 34 years and that the Buddhist *Mahāvamsa* does the same.[1] Apropos the Puranas he remarks: "The reading of the present Nagari edition of Vayu Purana and Brahmanda Purana is evidently wrong, for the expression *chatur-vimśat* is incorrect if it should mean 24 and it ought to be *chatur-vimśati*, in which case the metre of the verse would be wrong. The version of the Matsya Purana in all the printed editions is evidently incomplete and one of the verses which ought to go at

[1] *The Kings of Magadha*, p. 55. Max Muller in *A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature* (Ed. 1912), p. 139, footnote 2 and p. 152, footnote 4, says the same, though considering the figure 3 a mistake.

the end of this dynasty is placed before the verse referring to Asoka...thus omitting to mention the names of the first two kings of the Maurya dynasty, and the number of years they respectively reigned, and putting the last two kings at the commencement of the description of this dynasty."[1] The sum of the two reigns (34+28) added to the alleged date between 272 and 269 for Asoka's coronation pushes at the least to 331 B.C. when, according to the Greek accounts, Sandrocottus had most definitely not mounted the throne at Palibothra and probably Xandrames had already done so. One Buddhist record, the *Mūlakalpa*[2] gives Bindusara alone 70 years, rendering absolutely impossible the overlapping of the time of Chandragupta with that of Sandrocottus. If we make a reverse movement and keep 325-315 as a fixed point and calculate forward from it, the sum of 34 and 28 years and much more the sum of 34 and 70 rush us to the hither side of 272-269 B.C. Then there is no possibility of the five Greek kings synchronising with the date of the Edict. Hence, either way, there is no clear-cut case in this field. If we separate the coronation from the accession, as many scholars do, the position is still worse. The choice of smaller reign-periods, no less than of Asoka's thirteenth regnal year for the Edict, seems favoured consciously or unconsciously by our historians against the background of Sir William's hypothesis. The acceptance of that background blinds them to a host of possibilities..

Although Bhandarkar appears to side with Deb he does not give up either the identification of Sandrocottus with Chandragupta Maurya or the contemporaneity of Alexander's third-generation successors with Asoka. One wonders how he would have tackled the problem of Bindusara's and Chandragupta's reign-periods. Perhaps he would have cut them down to suitable lengths, for there was no doubt in his mind about that identification and that contemporaneity. However, our whole treatment of Asoka has shown that in no point is grave doubt not called for and in certain points a straight rejection even is the most logical course.

In passing, we may touch on the subject of Mauryan art. At times the allegation is made that Asoka's monuments show distinct derivation from those of the Achaemenians of Persia who immediately preceded the age of Sandrocottus. Some resemblances between Achaemenian art and Asokan are undeniable, but Havell and Codrington[3] have stressed so many essentially Indian characteristics in both subject and inspiration that the charge of direct derivation cannot at all be upheld. The resemblances are easily explained by

[1] *Ibid.*, P. 56.

[2] V, 449. *Vide* Barua, *Op-cit.*, p. 46.

[3] *Ancient India*, pp. 18, 19.

the admittedly common traditions inherited by Indian and Iranian cultures. The hypothesis of direct influence occurs only against a background of Sir William Jones's supposition about Sandrocottus. And here we may remark on a curious detail. While the monuments of Asoka can be recognised as typically Indian in many features, the excavations which have revealed on the site of Pataliputra the palace of Sandrocottus described by Megasthenes have brought home many typically Persian characteristics in important matters. N.R.Ray writes: "A close parallel to the...palace, as excavated, may be recognised in the Achaemenid Hall of Hundred Columns at Persepolis."[1] Although common traditions have been considered responsible in this connection too and were certainly at work, the plea is far weaker than in the case of Asokan monuments. The comparatively greater weakness may well be regarded as due to Sandrocottus's having been post-Achaemenian and to Asoka's having been, contrary to the current theory, no grandson of Sandrocottus.

A passing treatment of another topic may also be in order. The formula of Asoka's edicts, "Thus saith King Priyadarsin" may seem an echo of "Thus saith the King Darius", and again a direct influence of the Achaemenians may be asserted. But there is really no ground for the assertion. One of the set phrases prescribed by Kautilya in his *Arthaśāstra* for what is called a *prajña-pana-śāsana* ("writ of information") is *evam āha* ("thus saith").[2] So the formula is definitely of indigenous origin. The same can be said of the Asokan words *lipi* and *dibi*, meaning "writing", which have been compared to the Persian word for inscription. But the Asokan words have an Indian parentage. Panini (IV,1.49) has used the phrase *Yavanānī lipi*, "writing of the Yavanas"; he (III,2.21) also uses the forms *lipikara* and *libikara* for the scribe, and Sanskrit has the word *dibira*, for *lipikara*, from the root *diba* or *dipa*, "to write".[3]

Majumdar, Raychaudhuri and Datta,[4] though unaware of the objections to the current chronlology and disposed to see several influences emanating from Persian and Greek officials in the Indus-provinces during the Achaemenian rule and the post-Alexandrine period, have yet declared: "Whether some important features of the architecture of the Maurya period and certain phrases used in the Asokan edicts are...to be attributed to their enterprise, is a highly debatable question."

Our survey of all the arguments from Asoka is now over. Old impressions

[1] In his article in *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 489.
[2] Mookerji, *Asoka*, p. 108, footnote 3.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 1366, footnote 5.
[4] *An Advanced History of India*, p. t8.

die hard, yet how in the present case are they to be saved from dying ? Nothing substantial remains to which they may cling for life. We may regret to surrender the thrill of feeling the Orient and the Occident suddenly connected up by Rock Edicts II and XIII and a definite synchronism revealed; but history is a stern master and demands the renunciation of many a thrilling illusion. There seems no escape from rejecting the middle of the third century B.C. as the approximate date of these inscriptions and from believing that there is a strong case for Asoka's being the grandson of the Indian king whom the Greek historians make a contemporary of Alexander the Great and Seleucus Nicator. No link between that enigmatic ruler of Palibothra and the Buddhist emperor, whose grandfather was Chandragupta Maurya, can be traced and, so far as any evidence about Asoka is concerned, we are free to place, if the right reasons can be discovered, the founding of the Maurya dynasty in 1534 B.C., as computed by the Puranas.

(To be continued)

K. D. SETHNA

Students' Section

MY BOYHOOD UNDER SRI AUROBINDO

THE IMPULSE TOWARDS LAYA

SELF : *When the human soul has reached the perfection of the spiritual state it feels the attraction of laya irresistible. It feels that the purpose for which it was sent here on earth is accomplished and it must at once return to and rest in the Divine above, unless it is a special soul, an Avatar.*

SRI AUROBINDO : If it were so, then the soul would have to go into Laya, Avatar or no Avatar. For if the purpose for which it is here is fulfilled, then there is no reason for it to remain any longer here. (20-9-1936)

SELF : *When the old Yogis made spiritualisation their goal, it was not because they were weak, ignorant and selfish, seeking their own personal perfection and not the perfection of the terrestrial existence. They simply could not restrain their souls from Laya. It is natural that one should not go against the impulse of one's soul. Moreover, it is by no means an illusion, otherwise the Divine too will be an illusion. We are saved from the impulse by the descent of the Avatar.*

SRI AUROBINDO : I do not understand the reasoning. If the soul's natural impulse is to seek laya and that is the true theory, otherwise the Divine would be an illusion, then anything contrary to it (e.g. my teaching that the true purpose of existence here is the manifestation of the Divine in the world and not laya) must be false. The Divine in the world and its manifestation here must be an illusion. The Avatar being here can only delay the laya, it can't alter the nature of things or the purpose of existence. (20-9-1936)

SELF : *It is the descent of the Mother and yourself that helped us to transform the attraction for Laya into one for the supramental life on earth. It must have demanded of you a Herculean work.*

SRI AUROBINDO : What work ? You have said the purpose of existence is for the soul to have laya in the Divine. There can be no work—the only divine work possible is to get ready for laya and, once ready, to go into laya.

(20-9-1936)

SELF : *But the other alternative became possible only because the Divine is here in a personal form. The soul may prefer now to live with Him and act as His instrument rather than disappear into laya.*

SRI AUROBINDO : The Divine being here in a personal form is only for the work of further manifestation. How can it alter the fundamental purpose of the soul's presence here—which always was, according to the laya theory, to come into the world in order to go out of it again ? (20-9-1936)

SELF : *The old impulse will remain if the sadhaka himself does not abide with the will of the Supermind. And the Supramentalisation can never be achieved unless he accepts the personal aspect of the Divine. It is the personal aspect that creates the possibility of saving the soul from laya. Is all this correct* ?

SRI AUROBINDO : No. The impulse towards laya is a creation of the mind, it is not the sole possible destiny of the soul. When the mind tries to abolish its own ignorance, it finds no escape from it except laya, because it supposes that there is no higher principle of cosmic existence beyond itself—beyond itself is only the pure Spirit, the absolute impersonal Divine. Those who go through the heart (love, bhakti) do not accept laya, they believe in a state beyond of eternal companionship with the Divine or dwelling in the Divine without laya. All this quite apart from supramentalisation. What then becomes of your starting-point that laya is the inevitable destiny of the soul and it is only the personal descent of the Avatar that saves it from inevitable laya ?

(20-9-1936)

SELF : *I wrote to you at some length about Avatar and laya. Was it not helped by the higher knowledge ?*

SRI AUROBINDO : It may have been a partial knowledge, but badly expressed by the mind. (22-9-1936)

SELF : *What was wrong in it ?*

SRI AUROBINDO : There were two points of error. (1) That the soul formerly had no other possibility once it reached the Divine than laya. There

were other possibilities, e.g., passing into a higher plane, living in the Divine or in the presence of the Divine. Both imply the refusal of birth and leaving the Lila on earth. (2) That it was only for the sake of living with the incarnate Divine and by reason of this descent that the soul consented to give up laya. The capital point is the supramentalisation of the being which is the Divine intention in the evolution on earth and cannot fail to come; the descent or incarnation is only an instrumentation for bringing that about. Your statement therefore becomes wrong by incompleteness. If you had said "laya or other evasion of life" and "the Descent and the supramentalisation", then you would have got the right thing. (22-9-1936)

SELF : *You said, "It may have been a partial knowledge, but badly expressed by the mind". How did the mind bring about errors in the act of transmitting it ?*

SRI AUROBINDO : It comes through the mind, so the mind can always modify its expression unless it is entirely and absolutely still. (23-9-1936)

NAGIN DOSHI

THE PURANAS

Their Place in the Hindu Scriptures and Their Historical Value*

THE article in the previous issue ended with the philological basis on which Dr. Pusalker has tried to identify Kurusravana of the Vedic age with Kuru Samvarana of a later age. Now we may take the factual basis of this matter, as these two names have occured in different scriptures, and examine how far they are identical. In the Rigvedic stanza 10-33-6, Kuru Sravana is mentioned as the son of Trasadasyu who is both a king and a Rishi in Vedic times. While commenting on the 27th sukta of the 5th Mandala of the Rigveda, Sri Aurobindo says that "Trasadasyu is the half-god, man turned into the Indra type; therefore he is described by the usual epithets of Indra, "Asura", "Satpati, "Magavan" (*Hymns to the Mystic Fire* P. 309). In the hymn 42 of the fourth Mandala he is the Rishi of all the ten stanzas, while himself is the god for the last six stanzas and for the first four the gods are Indra and Varuna. In the 9th stanza of this hymn he is said to be the son of Purukutsa; in the 8th stanza it is said that Purukutsa's wife Durgaha by performing worship to Indra and Varuna obtained a son like Indra by their favour. Then again in the Rigvedic stanza 5-33-8 he is referred to as belonging to the race of Girikshit. As regards Samvarana he is a Rishi of the Rigveda and is the son or descendant of another Rishi, named Prajapati, who in turn is the son of the famous Visvamitra. But this Samvarana has nothing to do either with Trasadasyu of the Rigveda or with the king Samvarana of the Puranas who is the father of the famous Kuru of the lunar dynasty. The words Samvarana and Sravana, with their different meanings, did not get confused or get transformed the one into the other in the Rigveda itself; nor did these words which are common enough to occur in the Puranas or other writings get anywhere confused and changed from

* Readers of *Mother India* may have noticed that these articles do not form a part of the original series, "The Four Ages of India's Cultural Cycle". The present articles had to be written with a view to give some new ideas based on what the author understands of Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of the Puranas which more than other Indian scriptures are being used for history-purposes by modern history-scholars. The author felt that unless correct relationship of the Puranas with the totality of the Indian scriptures were realised there would be every chance of gross errors being committed in collecting data for history from the Puranas. So these articles were immediately undertaken. Their subject also forms part of the original series though this is not its proper place there.

one to the other. The Samvarana of the Rigveda and the Samvarana of the Puranas are two different personages ; so too the Kuru Sravana of the Rigveda is a different personage from the two Samvaranas. In the face of such a definite account in the Rigveda itself that Trasadasyu belonged to the race of Girikshit, the attempt to identify him with the race of Puru of the Lunar dynasty may perhaps be due to the word Puru forming part of the name Purukutsa who is the father of Trasadasyu. Another Puranic history-scholar D.R. Mankad puts him in the Solar dynasty simply because in the Puranas it is mentioned that Mandhata of the Solar dynasty had a son named Purukutsa whose son was named Trasadasyu. In spite of definite facts being mentioned in the hymns themselves, this scholar says, "I have doubt about these interpretations of Sayana". There is no interpretation at all here. It is mere acceptance, word-to-word, of the Sanskrit of the hymn. Sayana may have erred in many interpretations ; but how he has erred here in this literal acceptance has not been shown. Then, the words Samvarana and Sravana, if not as names of persons, at least as words with different meanings can occur anywhere in Sanskrit writings. One can never get corrupted into the other ; yet Dr. Pusalker says, "The name Kuru Sravana in later days seems to have been corrupted into Kuru Samvarana, then the names were split up and different persons came to be designated by the word, and then various stories came to be attached to the names Samvarana and Kuru without the least reference to any sort of accuracy."

We may examine some more facts as they are mentioned in the Puranas and the Rigveda and see whether they are correctly described in history-books. If we follow the Puranas, we are in the 28th four-age cycle, yuga-chakra, of the aeonic cycle, Manvantara, and about 5000 years of Kali yuga have passed away. It is true that the Puranas have not developed the idea of sub-cycles of their yuga-chakra which in Sri Aurobindo's terms are called "Cycles of Human Civilisation" or merely "Human Cycles". The Puranas say that in the first age of every yuga-chakra the Rishis begin a life of spiritual culture in India in a limited circle of human society, a culture which goes on expanding and getting assimilated in the consciousness of all humanity; but, since the spiritual power of it is not strong enough for carrying out the work, a dissolution of the society sets in, a new spiritual dharma is started by the beginning of a new cycle with a new set of Rishis. We see that this idea of the Puranas tallies to a very great extent with the idea of the cycles of human civilisation. In the terms of Sri Aurobindo, instead of the Rishis starting the new cycle the "Supermen" will start it.

As regards the Rigveda, the Puranas say that at the end of the third age, Dwapara yuga, and at the beginning of the fourth age, Kali yuga, of every

yuga-chakara, a Vyasa compiles all the Vedas and the Puranas and as it were edits them. The Rigvedic document that we have is one such compilation and it is admitted by all to be authentic. In the Puranas edited by Vyasa there seem to have been later some changes and naturally scholars are cautious about them. But as regards the Vedas, though nobody doubts the text which has come down to us from the Rishis through Guru-sishya-parampara as they call it on account of their memorisation of it, the names of the Rishis and the Devas of the hymns seem doubtful. Shaunaka Maharshi, an ancient commentator on the Rigveda, tells us in his book *Bṛhaddevata* how the Acharyas, Kraushtiki, Sakatayana, Aswalayana and others differ from one another in these things and it is their versions that we have now and it is on their versions that Sayana based his edition of the Rigveda and wrote his commentary. But the historical data contained in the text of the Rigveda about its own period have suffered no confusion ; so they must be more true than the historical data in the Puranas about the Rigvedic period. Even the names of the Rishis and the Devas of the Rigveda as edited by the later Acharyas may be more true than in the Puranic account. Till the scriptures came to be put into manuscripts, all that they contained of past events and of the previous scriptures was transmitted only orally. Srutis and smritis being earlier and more sacred than the Puranas, it was more possible for changes to have occured in these latter than in the former which passed from Guru to Guru. Besides, as we have already seen, the Rigveda deals with the Solar and Lunar kings of its own perjod in clearer terms than the Puranas. In fact the Puranas deal with the kings and their dynasties in chronological terms of succession clearly from the beginning of the Kaliyuga of this cycle but they never speak clearly of the kings and dynasties either of the three previous ages of the cycle or of the still previous cycles. In spite of their profession to narrate the story of the future kings it is as good as evident that what they have narrated of the history of the Kali yuga kings is only what they have actually collected from various sources ; for where they have really tried to speak of the future they have miserably failed.

We shall now examine and compare the data of the Solar and Lunar kings as we find them in the Rigveda with the version of the naturalistic historians as they have derived it from the Puranas. In the list of the Rishis and gods of the Rigveda we find that Vivasvan, a Rishi of the Rigveda, has a son named Manu who is also a Rishi. This Manu is said to have two sons Nabhanedhishta and Saryata who are both kings and Rishis. In the text of the Rigveda we find only once, in the hymn 10-60, the mention of the word Ikshwaku, and there it is said that a king named Asamati, a descendant of Bhajeratha, belonged to the race of Ikshwaku. Neither here in this Sukta nor anywhere else is it suggested that Ikshwaku ruled as a king in the period of this Rigvedic cycle. In

the Rigveda the further information that we have of the Solar dynasty is that Vivasvan is the son of Aditi ; this Aditi is the daughter of Dakshina and Dakshina is the daughter of Prajapati who is the son of Visvamitra. All these are the Rishis of the Rigvedic period. Thus the son-god Vivasvaṇ, symbolised in the Rishi Vivasvan, his son Manu and his two sons, the solar kings, all belong to the clan of the Rishi Visvamitra. The Puranas trace the genealogy of the solar dynasty from Brahma to Daksha, then to Aditi, then to Vivasvan, then to Manu and finally to Ikshwaku and his brothers. But then the Puranas say that these descendants of Vivasvan, the sun-god, through his son Manu, are distributed over 28 cycles up to now ; they do not mention that all of them or some of them take birth in each cycle. Thus, for the history of the Rigvedic period, the Rigveda alone can give us historical data except when the other scriptures definitely say that to this Rigvedic period alone a particular event belongs.

Similarly of the Lunar kings of the Puranas who are Pururavas, Ayus, Nahusha, Yayati and others we find in the Rigveda a version altogether different from the version of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's *The Vedic Age* which represents the naturalistic group of historians. The Puranas speak of Pururavas as the grandson of Vaivasvat Manu from the mother's side and as the grandson of the Lunar deity from the side of the father. The son of Pururavas is Ayus, whose son is Nahusha, whose son is Yayati and whose sons are Yadu, Turvasu, Druhya and so on. The Puranas again do not say that all these have taken birth in this Rigvedic cycle. In the present document of the Rigveda we find that Pururavas is nowhere mentioned in the text as a king of its period. There is a colloquy between Pururavas and his celestial wife Urvasi in the hymn 10-95. The later Acharyas have mentioned them as both gods and Rishis. Ayus is neither a god nor a Rishi nor even a king in the present Rigveda. Yayati and his father Nahusha are mentioned as kings and to their credit there are a few stanzas for each in one hymn in the Rigveda. In it Nahusha is the son of another Manu who in turn is the son of Samvarana whose father is Prajapati and who, as we have already seen, is the son of Visvamitra. All these are also Rishis of the Rigveda. The Vaivasvat Manu and the Samvarana Manu of the Rigveda are the descendants of the Rishi Prajapati. Thus the two Manus and their parents and the solar and the lunar kings of this Rigvedic cycle, all of them belong to the clan of the Rishi Visvamitra. Then again, according to the Puranas, a Manu named Savarni will be the ruling mental deity of the earth in the next aeonic cycle, Manvantara, some millions of years hence. The word Savarni Manu differs in its meaning from the word Samvarana Manu who is the father of the lunar kings of this Rigvedic cycle. As Sravana and Samvarana have a sound-resemblence, so too the words Savarni and Samvarana resemble each other in sound. Yet they are altogether different words. Perhaps the naturalistic

historians have chosen not to tackle these Manus of the Rigveda. It is not known how the ritualistic historian will explain the relationship between these two Manus of the Rigveda and the other Manus of the Puranas.

Again if we examine the genealogies of the Rishis, Visvamitra and Jamadagni, as they are given in the Rigveda and in the Vishnu Purana, we find that these two Rigvedic Rishis are altogether different physical embodiments from the Puranic Rishis of the same names. They belong to the Satya yuga of this cycle. It may be that those of the Puranas belong to the Treta yuga of this cycle and the Ramayana also says that they lived in Rama's time. Jamadagni of the Rigveda belongs to the clan of the Angirasa Rishi through his father Bharga and the still earlier forefather Kanwa. The father of Visvamitra of the Rigveda is Gathi. In the Vishnu Purana the father of both Visvamitra and Jamadagni is a Rishi by name Richika. But the mother of Jamadagni is Satyavati, a descendant of the Lunar race, and then Visvamitra is the son of Satyavati's mother. If these facts as they are described in the Rigveda and the Purana are not ignored and if we refuse to be obsessed by the occurrence of the same names in the different scriptures it cannot be said that they are physically identical persons or that they continued to live in the same body from one age to the other. The description of the genealogies proves definitely that they are different physical persons. Yet the Visvamitra and the Jamadagni of the second age may be in soul the same Visvamitra and in soul the same Jamadagni as those of the Rigvedic age. There are many such instances of similar names with different genealogies in different ages mentioned in the scriptures which go to prove that the first three ages of India's cultural cycle are definitely distinct from one another. Just as the Supreme Divine descends in different ages as different Avatars, so also it seems great Vibhutis and Rishis descend in different ages sometimes with the same names, as the scriptures narrate, to fulfil the divine work that they are destined to do.

The history of an ancient nation or people like the Indian can be true only when it is written after understanding, firstly, the religious and spiritual life of the Vedic period and also of the other periods including the Puranic, and, secondly, how the religious and spiritual life of those periods affected and moulded the political, social and economic life of India. With a wrong understanding of them, either by the naturalists or the ritualists, the whole thing will go wrong and will be a misrepresentation. In the very initial step of understanding the Vedas, Mr. Griffiths, a naturalistic interpretor of the Vedas, says that the Rigveda is a knowledge of recited prayers, Yajurveda of sacrifice, Samaveda of chanted prayer and Atharvaveda of prayer, charm and spells. So too the ritualist, while accepting largely the above interpretation, adds that they, the Vedas, have the power of leading man to happiness in this and other

worlds by guiding him through a religious life of worship of the gods. But Sri Aurobindo says that the above results or the forms of the Vedas are only subsidiary and that their main attempt was spiritual; he says that the Rigveda is a collection of Mantras of the divine Consciousness which bring to us its light of revelation even in this life and on this earth and not merely happiness in this world or in vital and mental heavens in other worlds or planes of consciousness; the Yajurveda is a collection of Mantras of the divine Power which bring to us its will of effectuation; and the Samaveda is a collection of Mantras of the divine Ananda which bring to us its spiritual delight of existence. We thus see the difference in outlook in the very first step of understanding the Vedas and interpreting them by the three schools. When we miss the spirit of the Vedas at the very initial stage, we miss all the truth about it, and also about the history of the Indian people of which the beginning and very foundation is the spiritual culture of the Rigvedic Rishis. In India there are many Vedic research institutes, e.g., those in Poona, Mysore, Hoshiarpur, Surat and other places, and then there are many historical associations, the biggest of which is perhaps the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan of Bombay, and we see in none of them even an attempt to read and understand Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of the Vedas and the Hindu scriptures. Apart from these there are the Mutts of Hindu religious Gurus, which are supposed to be the centres of Vedic religion and Sanskrit literature. These seem to be so absorbed in the ritualistic aspect of the Vedas that they may not be knowing that there is a spiritual interpretation by Sri Aurobindo. There may be rare instances here and there of individual historians, like Mohanlal Vidyarthi of Cawnpore, who have tried to understand Sri Aurobindo's interpretation of the Indian scriptures; but otherwise all the above-mentioned institutions have not even once quoted Sri Aurobindo's views in their writings on Indian history and Indian religion. They have perhaps thought that an understanding of the Europeans' interpretation of the Indian scriptures would give them the correct clue to understanding the spiritual and religious life of India. But it is this very thing that has brought a complete failure in their work.

Just as we find historical data in the Rigveda, so too we can find it in the other Vedas, in the Brahmanas, Aranyakas, Upanishads and the immense writings of the Smritis. All the historical data contained in these will have to be collected and placed in their proper periods and only afterwards the data in the Puranas which deal with all the above periods and also of the previous cycles collectively can be looked into to verify the data in the earlier scriptures. But to ignore the earlier scriptures and base oneself on the data of the Puranas, without a proper understanding of other sacred sources and also of the religious and spiritual culture of India in all its stages, for writing India's ancient history can only lead to a gross misinterpretation of it.

NARAYANA C. REDDY

NOTE

Question : Here one two sentences form N. C. Reddi's article in the 'Mother India' of December 5 : "The Rishis of the Vedic Age by their spiritual culture and discipline attempted an integral spiritual perfection of man in the mass. But the mental evolution of the physical mind of man in the mass by the process of Nature had not made enough advance to make the Rishis' work possible, and since this mental evolution of man is the first preoccupation of Nature and also the intention of the Supreme Divine, the Vedic Rishis' effort failed". The Vedic Rishis practised an esoteric cult of spirituality. It was not meant for the masses to whom their work would have only a naturalistic or ritualistic meaning. Their writing was specially so phrased as to conceal its core of spiritual practice and experience. There was no attempt for man in the mass. How then could there be a failure in what was never attempted ?

(A READER)

ANSWER : The Vedic Rishis practised not merely an esoteric cult of spirituality, but also an exoteric cult of spiritual religion which could result in an opening of the inner mind to psychological truths by which men might become gradually ready for spiritual initiation into the esoteric cult. The exoteric religion which we may call the ritualistic cult, while giving material fruits on the material plane, had certainly the effect of producing inner results in the inner being. The Hymns of the Rishis were so phrased as to reveal to each man the thing that he could see. The man of physical mind could see, in the word Agni, only the god of physical fire, but the man of mental opening, could see also its psychological sense of God-Will. So while the phraseology indicated to the man of physical mind only the physical Agni, it never debarred from its psychological and spiritual meaning to any one who was open to it. The spiritual atmosphere of the Vedic period was such that, as Sri Aurobindo puts it, each man, at least every Aryan who practised the sacrifice, was able to see at once from the very sound of the word the "psychology of the word". The very act of ritualistic performance of the sacrifice with the use of the Mantra was a certain kind of initiation; so, by gradual growth of the inner consciousness, even to the man in the mass on account of his partaking in the sacrifice, the Rishis meant to impart spiritual perfection. Yet Nature's process of mental evolution was going on side by side, amongst the Aryan race as well as amongst men outside that race. The Aryan cult increased its fold as time went on and as it gradually increased, a stage arrived, owing to the different processes of evolution in action upon man, when the gulf between the initiated and the uninitiated was so vast that to bridge the gulf a different culture was required by which the esoteric meaning could become more plain. Long

before such a stage arrived, the Vedic Rishi had disappeared leaving the cult in the hands of the priests and a small number of the spiritually initiated. These latter, by a strenuous effort, became the Upanishadic Rishis whose word was more plain but could act only on the psycho-spiritual consciousness. Simultaneously the priests developed their priestly cult which turned into Words of Power called the Brahmanas; these had physical effects and to a certain extent psychological effects but not spiritual effects. So instead of being instruments of integral or total perfection of man's being they became instruments of typal perfection, that is, of only one of the four Swabhavas of the whole perfection of man, which are Truth, Power, Unity and Love. Since the Vedic cult was not sufficient to bridge the gulf by a new total method of psychic perfection, what fault is there in saying that it failed ?

We may have the consolation if we like that it is not they who failed but it was the Supreme Divine's intention that their work should so end and the ideal or total spiritual perfection of man's being could not be continued by the Fire Cult with its Mantra, and that the Rigvedic Rishis did not continue to live on the earth for introducing the necessary change in the cult even as Sri Aurobindo has introduced now the supramental culture. Theirs was an attempt at the total spiritualisation of man's being in the Aryan mass but there was no attempt to change it into a supramental culture. It was only an "Intuitive Culture" and as such it was bound to fail and it failed by changing into a method of typal perfection of the succeeding age.

One may add that on page 145 of *The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo* (part Eight), it is said that the Vedic Rishis not only sought a realisation upon earth instead of escaping from the world, but "even conceived a golden age when this realisation could be achieved". Surely "a golden age" of spiritual realisation must mean collective spirituality, and how could they have conceived such an age without having as their aim the spiritual perfection of man in the mass ?

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